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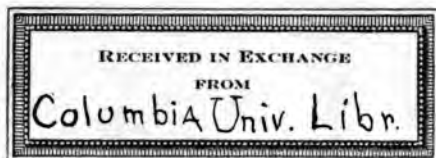
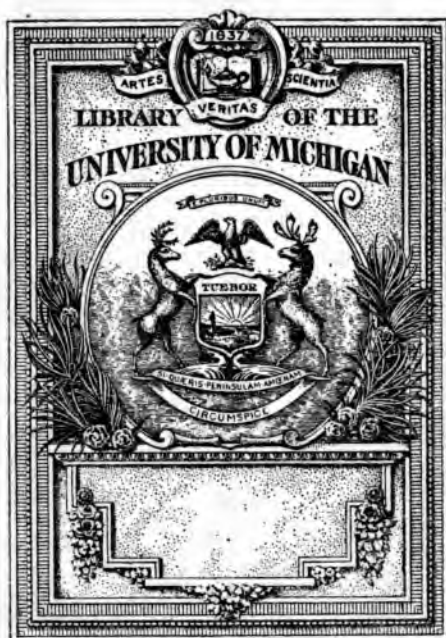
**Disease-Spirits and Divine Cures**  
**Among the Greeks and Romans**

BY

**CESIDIO R. SIMBOLI, A.M.**  
Master of History at the Allen-Stevenson School  
New York City

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE  
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK  
1921



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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
GEORGE WILLIS BOTSFORD  
WHO TAUGHT  
THE WRITER HOW TO READ HISTORY



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I DISEASE-SPIRITS

### CHAPTER I

#### HELLENIC BELIEFS REGARDING THE GODS AND DEMONS AS SENDERS OF DISEASE

	PAGE
1. BRIEF SURVEY OF GREEK <i>Kakodaimonia</i> .....	9-12
2. MALIGN SPIRITS AND PERSONIFICATION OF DISEASE.....	12-27
(1) The Keres.....	13-16
(2) Lamia.....	16-17
(3) The Fever-God, Epiales.....	17-18
(4) <i>Hiera Mania</i> or Epilepsy.....	18-22
(5) Pan and Madness.....	22-24
(6) The Evil Eye.....	24-27

### CHAPTER II

#### ROMAN CONCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF DISEASE

1. ROMAN VIEWS REGARDING EVIL SPIRITS.....	28-32
2. THE <i>Striges</i> .....	32-34
3. THE DISEASE-DEMONS.....	34
4. THE DEIFICATION OF DISEASES.....	34-36

## PART II THE CURES

### CHAPTER I

#### THE APPEAL TO THE GODS

1. THE APOTROPAIC RITUAL.....	39-41
2. THE ANTHESTERIA AND LEMURIA.....	41-44
3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EASTERN REDEMPTIVE CULTS..	44-50
4. THE GODS AS HEALERS.....	50-56
(1) Athena.....	50
(2) Apollo.....	50-51
(3) Isis.....	51-52
(4) Asklepios.....	52-56

## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER II

## INCUBATION

	PAGE
1. ITS PREVALENCE.....	57-58
2. FAMOUS <i>Asklepeia</i> .....	58-59
3. COMMUNICATING DIRECTLY WITH DEITY.....	60-61
4. THE RITE OF INCUBATION.....	61-63
5. MEDICAL PROCEDURE.....	63-64
6. THE <i>Cures</i> .....	64-66

## CHAPTER III

## PROPHYLACTIC AND CURATIVE MAGIC

I. MAGIC IN GREECE.....	67-70
1. Probable Origin of Magic.....	67-68
2. Literary Derivation of Magic.....	68-70
II. MAGIC IN ROME.....	71-78
1. Pliny's Discussion of Remedial Magic.....	71-73
2. Prophylactic Amulets.....	73-75
3. Curative Magic Remedies.....	75-78
CONCLUSION.....	70

**PART I**  
**DISEASE-SPIRITS**



# CHAPTER I

HELLENIC BELIEFS REGARDING THE GODS AND DEMONS AS  
SENDERS OF DISEASE

### I. *Brief Survey of Greek Kakodaimonia*

THE supreme interest in most conditions lies in the knowledge of their causes. The human mind is so fashioned that it can never rest until a thing can be traced back to its original source. This is especially true of pathological conditions. When modern man, for instance, catches a cold his thought reverts to a draft, damp feet, a careless exposure, upon which to lay the blame. His trained intelligence leads him to find a physical basis for his ailments.

Not so primitive man. Like the savage of to-day, he ascribed his troubles to two possible causes: he considered them either a visitation from the gods as a punishment for his misdeeds and laxity in religious duties, or an interference of maleficent spirits. The latter belief was more common. In his anxiety, it seems, to find the source of his illness and apply suitable remedies, the man of the past sought to discover the spirit who was the cause of his sickness; and if he had been in any manner remiss in the performance of wonted duties, he naturally interpreted his headache, colic, fever, or any other disorder, as a reminder of his negligence.<sup>1</sup>

The Greeks proved to be no exception to this general ex-

<sup>1</sup>In general this is the view taken by modern anthropologists. See particularly Jevons, F. B., *An Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London, 1896), p. 190; Tyler, E. B., *Anthropology* (New York, 1899), p. 342ff. The Hebrews refined this doctrine, and, later, the Christians gave it a new emphasis. In the Old Testament resistance to the messengers of Yahweh was punished with blindness (Gen. xix, 11); for desecrating the ark the Philistines were visited with a terrible plague (I Sam. v, 3-12); Moses' sister was punished with leprosy for slandering her brother (Num. xii); greed and falsehood were also rewarded with leprosy (II Kings v, 20-27). In like manner



perience of early mankind. Their rationalizing and scientific genius, however, kept them from falling into the gross vulgarities and absurdities so common in Oriental superstitions. For, although their vivid imagination peopled with living beings every stream, valley, and mountain, it never created a hierarchy of malignant spirits who possessed varying degrees of rank, power, and malevolence such as did the divers Asiatic peoples with whom the Greeks came in contact, especially the Jews.<sup>2</sup> And yet recent investigators have found that the Greeks, particularly those of the Hellenistic period, whose beliefs became deeply colored by the mystery-cults, had evolved a fairly clear and well-formed demonology. Their *kakodaimonia*, at first impersonal and hazy, gradually came to assume a definite shape.<sup>3</sup>

This was but a natural process. Man always inclines toward the concrete and tangible, and, when he is confronted with the mystery which surrounds many of the troubles that afflict human life—such as the normal diseases attacking children, hereditary complaints, sudden death, and the liabilities to infection and contagion—unable to discover a satisfactory explanation in the physical world, he is likely to ascribe them to the will of the gods or to the interference of the evil spirits.

From Homer down to the present day the popular Hellenic mind always attributed disorders of various kinds to supernatural powers. Thus the deadly pestilence that raged for nine days

in the New Testament, blindness was believed to be caused by sin (John ix); violent insanity was thought to be the work of demons (Luke viii, 26-33; Mark v, 12-13), and paralysis was due to the interference of the evil spirit (Luke xiii, 11-13).

<sup>2</sup>The post-Exilic literature swarms with angels, both good and bad. The best expression of this is exemplified by the Book of Enoch (translated by Charles, R. H., *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1913]). An exhaustive study of ancient and modern demonology has been made by J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 12 vols. (London, 1913). See especially vols. IX, pp. 88, 92, 94, 95-103; VIII, pp. 100-115. Also Conway, M.D., *Demonology and Devil-Lore*, 2 vols. (New York, 1889), I, ch. xi.

<sup>3</sup>Tambornino, J., *De Antiquorum Daemonismo* (Nuremberg, 1909); Babick, C. I., *Deisidaemonia Veterum Quaestiones* (Leipzig, 1901); Kropatsceck, J., *De Amuletorum apud Antiquos Usu* (Gryphiae, 1907); Harrison, J. E., *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1908).

amid the Achæan host "so that the folk began to perish," was sent by Apollo in answer to the prayer of his priest, because the son of Atreus had done dishonor to the latter's daughter.<sup>4</sup> This belief lives even to-day. In modern Græce many illnesses, especially those of a nervous character, are quite generally ascribed to demoniac influence, so that recourse is had by the afflicted to the priest rather than to the doctor, in order that the evil spirits by which they are possessed may once for all be authoritatively exorcised.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, if a community of ancient Greece was overtaken by some calamity, either in the form of an earthquake or a plague causing general mortality, the folk-fancy was likely to invent the most ingenious and naïve explanation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, troubles of all kinds were usually attributed not to natural causes but to supernatural agencies. Thus in the village of Anagyrus, a deme of Athens, a certain peasant unintentionally committed a trespass in the sanctuary of a local demon, whereupon the outraged spirit smote the sacrilegious farmer with a deadly disease. And as though this punishment was not enough, the demon, not long afterwards, flying to the poor man's house, murdered his wife and children.<sup>7</sup> This demoniacal visitation, and others of like nature, terrified the people, so that to avoid a repetition of such misfortunes, warnings were given by the priests not to talk nor whisper while passing in front of a shrine dedicated to a demon, lest in his wrath he might destroy them.<sup>8</sup>

At times, moreover, the malign spirit was conceived as attaching himself to an individual, haunting and persecuting him.

<sup>4</sup>*Iliad*, I, 1-83.

<sup>5</sup>Lawson, J. C., *Modern Greek Folk-Lore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 22ff. Cf. Rodd, R., *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece* (London, 1892), p. 165.

<sup>6</sup>Thus the town of Tamesa in Southern Italy was once evidently stricken by some form of cholera common in those pestiferous regions. The townspeople accounted for it by inventing a most ingenious story in which the whole disaster is attributed to the work of a malign ghost (See Pausanias, translated with a commentary by J. G. Frazer, 6 vols., London, 1898, vi, 6. 7-11.)

<sup>7</sup>Suidas, s. v. *Anagyrasios daimon*.

<sup>8</sup>Hesychius, s. v. *Kreittonas*.

Plutarch,<sup>9</sup> although writing on a Roman subject, but, it seems, from the point of view of a Greek, tells the story of the ghost that pursued and demoralized Brutus before the fateful battle of Philippi. While all the Roman camp was wrapped in sleep, there came to the warrior "a strange and dreadful apparition, an ugly and terrible shape, telling the general that his hour had struck. But Brutus, plucking up courage to question it, said, 'Who are you, of gods or men, and what is your errand with me?' The phantom answered, 'I am your evil genius, Brutus, and you shall see me at Philippi.'" Nor did the demon relent in his persecution until he had encompassed the utter destruction of his victim.

## 2. *Malign Spirits and Personification of Disease*

Although Greek medical science had made remarkable advance, the common people, naturally conservative, still clung to their superstitious beliefs. These beliefs were carefully fostered by priestly quacks for their own personal advantage. And since it was popularly believed that all forms of physical and mental disorders arose from the interference of demons, it seemed quite logical to personify diseases and sickness. Thus the god Epiales was thought both the sender of fever and the fever itself;<sup>10</sup> and similarly with the demon Enodius, who was believed to cause diarrhea,<sup>11</sup> and the Great Mother, who brought on convulsions.<sup>12</sup> Epilepsy was regarded as a distinctly divine visitation and hence its sacred name: *hiera mania*. Fear, too, being a phenomenon of frequent recurrence, lent itself easily to personification and deification,<sup>13</sup> and so did the various forms of insanity.<sup>14</sup> The following are some of the more important Hellenic disease-demons.

<sup>9</sup>Plutarch, *Brutus*, 36; cf. *Cæsar*, 59. 5-7.

<sup>10</sup>Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1033f, and the scholia on line 1038 (*Scholia Græca in Aristophanem*, ed. Dubner, Paris, 1843).

<sup>11</sup>Hippocrates, translated by Francis Adams, 2 vols. (New York, 1917), II, p. 337.

<sup>12</sup>Hippocrates, *ibid*.

<sup>13</sup>Pausanias, i. 17. 1; cf. Plutarch, *Cleomenes*, 9.

<sup>14</sup>Pausanias, viii. 34. 1; cf. Rocher, *Lexikon*, s. v. *deimos* and *metus*, and *mania*, where many references will be found.

(1) THE KERES.—With his intuitive imagination the ancient Greek made forecast of a truth but lately verified by science; namely, that diseases arise through the influence of living forces: the germs. To them we give the name bacilli; he called them Keres. The Keres have a long and intricate life-history. They are woven into the pages of Hellenic literature of every period, and some students of the subject consider the word utterly untranslatable.<sup>15</sup>

The Keres were primarily and essentially spirits, invisible yet very real agents. For Homer they were the symbols of death and hate.<sup>16</sup> The chief purpose of the Keres was to sow trouble and discord in man's life. Human existence was deemed to be full of many fair and lovable things, but they were generally marred by the infernal Keres, who abhorred to see mankind happy and prosperous.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, they were thought to make life such an intolerable burden, as to induce individuals to prefer a quick, painless death on the field of battle rather than to live their lives to the bitter end.<sup>18</sup>

These creatures were often considered not only the cause of disease but the disease itself. Their activities extended over a wide range. Madness came from them, so also did blindness, whence the common expression of "casting a black Ker on their eyes."<sup>19</sup> Even blisters were said to come from them which they inflicted when partaking of certain foods.<sup>20</sup> Therefore the individual was advised to be strictly on guard, lest, while eating with his mouth open, the evil Keres might enter in. Porphyry, who was an orthodox vegetarian, states that these imps greatly delight in defiling and poisoning the meat of slaughtered ani-

<sup>15</sup>Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 212ff. See further Woodhouse, W. J., s. v. *Keres* in Hastings' *Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, vii, p. 687. The word *Ker* is generally connected with the Sanskrit *sar*, meaning *to tear asunder, to injure, to destroy*.

<sup>16</sup>*Iliad*, xxi, 66; i, 228.

<sup>17</sup>Plato, *Laws*, xi, 937D.

<sup>18</sup>Clement of Alex., *Stromata*, vi, 2. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Euripides, *Phanissæ*, 950.

<sup>20</sup>Porphyry, *De philos. ex. orac. haur.* p. 149 = Eusebius, *Preap. Evang.*, iv, 23. 3.

mals, and he cautions his readers on this account against the use of meat generally.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, he says, those who feed wholly on plants having a strong scent and purifying property, such as the rue and the buckthorn, will be never molested by the Keres.<sup>22</sup>

In a quaint moralizing poem preserved by Stobæus and attributed to Linos, are brought out the dangers of the Keres. These dangers, the writer thinks, can be met successfully only by prayer and sacrifice of purification. It runs as follows:

"Hearken now to my saying and zealously treasure in your mind and heart the simple truth about all things. If you wish to live in peace, first drive away from your home and farm the death-dealing Keres, for they are the ones that destroy the flock and the crop of the husbandman, marring all things with curses innumerable. And in order that they may deceive and entrap their victims, they assume varied and dreadful shapes. But do you keep them far away from you, never relaxing your watchfulness. Only through prayer and purification will you purge yourself to sanctification and thereby free yourself of the evil bonds of the baleful Keres. Prayer and purification will also deliver you from the enticement of the belly, that giver of all things shameful and wicked, for covetousness is its strong ally and it drives you along with the force of madness."<sup>23</sup>

The Keres were cruel and relentless. And since they were spirits, they were able to find easy admission into body and mind, bringing destruction in their wake. Like the fatal miasma germs, they wrought death wherever they went.<sup>24</sup>

In the early stages of Hellenic life, these strange creatures were thought to be sealed in a huge jar (*pitheos*).<sup>25</sup> But, in an evil hour, Pandora removed the lid and let the winged fiends fly out. Before this, according to Hesiod, the tribes of mortal men lived upon the earth free from evil, from hard toil and from

<sup>21</sup>Porphyry, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Porphyry, *l. c.*

<sup>23</sup>Stobæus, v, 22 (Meincke). The translation is substantially that of Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 168.

<sup>24</sup>Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 90-104.

<sup>25</sup>Babrius, *Fabulae*, 58.

grievous diseases which the baleful Keres give to men.<sup>26</sup> But after the release of these fierce demons, life became most uncertain and burdensome. For they, swarming about like noxious insects, brought upon many calamities, dread and filthy diseases, trembling old age, and the tragedy of it was that no mortal could escape them.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the common folk, being highly susceptible to superstition, and endowed with a lively fancy, lived in constant fear of these pernicious spirits. On this account, therefore, seasonal prayers were lifted up to Zeus Soter for deliverance and help.<sup>28</sup> And the practical Spartans, who felt apprehensive lest the Keres might pollute the gold and silver circulating in the city and thereby endanger the life of the people through their touch, gave order to the ephors to purify the precious metals and also exorcise the vaults of the treasury.<sup>29</sup> The manner of expelling these spirits was not by prayer, incantations, sacrifices, but by violence. The means used was a branch with leaves on.<sup>30</sup> This was waved violently in the affected area and the Keres were supposed to go out like flies. In case they offered resistance, they were driven out with powerful clubs.<sup>31</sup>

Woe to the man into whose body wicked Keres found their way! Once they took possession of him, they would kindle in his heart the flames of Jealousy, Envy, and Hatred. These would eat up the body and waste away the soul.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, one should be ever on guard against them with prayer and supplication to the friendly gods, who could deliver him from the

<sup>26</sup>Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 90f.

<sup>27</sup>*Iliad*, xii, 326; cf. Harrison, J. E., *Pandora's Box*, in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xx (1900), p. 103.

<sup>28</sup>Theognis, 768; cf. Minnermus, 2.5, who thinks the Keres are the cause of disease, disaster, and old age, as well as death.

<sup>29</sup>Harrison, *Pandora's Box*, p. 104.

<sup>30</sup>*Orphic Hymns*, xii.

<sup>31</sup>*Jahr. des Arch. Inst.*, x, 1895, p. 37, Fig. 11, where Hercules is represented expelling a winged Ker with his formidable club.

<sup>32</sup>The ancients personified the human passions, often grouping them under a collective name. Thus Democritus (*Frag.* 191 = Diels *Frag. der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin, 1912; ii, 101 and 285) calls jealousy, envy, and hatred Keres.

tyranny of the Keres, for they would attack not only his household, but also bring ruin upon his fields and crops.<sup>33</sup>

(2) LAMIA.—The man of the past was ever disposed to regard ghosts as fearsome rather than friendly. The idea of the bogey predominated over that of the guardian angel. And so Hesychius, in his endeavor to explain the word *kreittonas*, declares that the heroes, though they once might have been good spirits, must now be guarded closely and kept away from the threshold of your house lest they play a foul trick upon you. Therefore, he says, use the utmost precaution against them; and, he adds, when you pass by a wayside shrine dedicated to them, do not linger nor speak, but go your way stealthily and in silence.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it came about that a fair and surpassingly beautiful creature like Lamia was degenerated by the popular superstition into a hideous monster, a worker of disease and death. Tradition made Lamia the queen of the Libyans, a woman of great attraction and intelligence. Zeus fell in love with her, and Hera in her jealousy robbed her of her children. Lamia, spurred by revenge and despair, took to robbing others of their children. Later on she began to murder the children that she found, and those whom she could not kill, she afflicted with wasting diseases.<sup>35</sup> These savage acts reacted upon her appearance and rendered her face most ugly. To spite Hera, Zeus gave Lamia the power of taking her eyes out and of putting them in again,<sup>36</sup> thereby adding terror to her acts of brutality. Gradually her thirst for ruin grew more and more unquenchable, and going to the other extreme of human life, she began to attack old men and women. Like a sinister, fearful vampire she sucked their blood, thus weak-

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<sup>33</sup>According to Theophrastus (*de Caus. Plant*, v. 10. 4) each locality has its own peculiar Keres dangerous to plants and trees. Some of these, he thought, sprang from the air, others came from the soil.

<sup>34</sup>Hesychius, *s. v. Kreittonas*.

<sup>35</sup>C. I. G. 5430. See also Stoll's article in Rocher, *s. v. Lamia*, where numerous references are found.

<sup>36</sup>Diodorus, xx, 41; Suidas, *s. v. Lamia*; Arist., *Pax*. 757.

ening their already enfeebled bodies. As a direct result of this, all the sudorific ailments that accompany old age became more frequent and widespread. The common folk traced these ills to the work of Lamia.<sup>37</sup>

(3) THE FEVER-GOD, EPIALES.—This divinity was regarded at once as the sender of fever and the fever itself. He spared neither rich nor poor, neither old nor young, but attacked whomsoever he could without mercy. The miseries caused by the fever-demon, says Theognis,<sup>38</sup> are worse than the pangs of poverty and the discomforts of exile.

The etymology of the word is doubtful. Some have confused Epiales with Ephiales, the giant, son of Aloeus.<sup>39</sup> The former was essentially a spirit of sickness. He sent the cold, shivering fit, preceding fever; the fever itself;<sup>40</sup> and terrifying nightmares.<sup>41</sup> Aristophanes, and especially the scholiast on line 1038 of the *Wasps*, speak of Epiales solely in connection with the demon's fever-producing activities.<sup>42</sup> Hesychius, too, refers to him as the sender of chills and fever,<sup>43</sup> and Galen, much later, calls Epiales the quotidian fever.<sup>44</sup>

A vivid description of the terrible work of Epiales is given by Sophocles in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*.<sup>45</sup> The dramatist is depicting the deadly pestilence which ravaged central Greece. The date of the play is unknown, but Professor Jebb<sup>46</sup> places it between 429 and 420 B. C. The fury of the plague, which fell most heavily upon the city of Thebes, was intensified, no doubt, by the unsanitary conditions arising from its surrounding marshes.

<sup>37</sup>Rocher, *s. v. Lamia*; cf. Preller, L., *Griechische Mythologie*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1890), I, p. 379; 507ff.

<sup>38</sup>Theognis, 173f.

<sup>39</sup>*Iliad*, v. 385.

<sup>40</sup>Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v. Epiales*; Rocher, *s. v. Nosoi*. Cf. Jones, W. H. S., *Malaria and Greek History* (Manchester, 1909), p. 27ff.

<sup>41</sup>Sophron, *Fragments*, 99B (Ahrens).

<sup>42</sup>*Scholia Græca*, *s. v.* line 1038 (Dubner).

<sup>43</sup>Hesychius, *s. v. Epiales*.

<sup>44</sup>Galen, *On Fevers*, vii. p. 347 (Kuhn).

<sup>45</sup>*Oed. Tyr.*, 25-30.

<sup>46</sup>*Oed. Tyr.*, l. c.



Complete desolation and despair filled the country, which the god had swept with the might of his unrelenting anger. Oedipus appears ignorant of the great misfortune that had overtaken the city. He inquires of a priest to tell him why he and his followers are so sad and what is the cause of Thebes' ruin. The priest answers:

"With your own eyes you see the storm is grown  
Too strong, and Thebes can no more lift her head  
Out of the waves, clear from the surge of death.  
A blight is on her budding fruit, a blight  
On pasture cattle, and the barren pangs  
Of women: and the fiery fever-god  
Hath struck his blow—Pestilence sweeps the city,  
Empties the house of Cadmus and makes rich  
With tears and wailings the black house of Death."<sup>47</sup>

Possibly this passage refers to the great pestilence of 430 B. C., whose inroads among the Athenian population were never repaired. It was at this time that the statue of Health—Athena—was set up in the Acropolis as an averter of a possible recurrence of the fatal work of Epiales. Aripbron wrote passionate hymns and chants to the powerful goddess, which sound like fervent prayers for deliverance from the plague.<sup>48</sup> To reinforce the healing activities of Athena, Asklepios, the divine authority in the medical art, was also brought into the city from Epidaurus.<sup>49</sup> The two deities working in cooperation finally succeeded in stopping the plague caused by Epiales and restored health and tranquillity among the devout inhabitants.

(4) HIERA MANIA OR EPILEPSY.—The term *hiera mania*, or sacred madness, indicates that the disease was believed to be sent by some angry deity. The god was thought to enter the body

<sup>47</sup>Sheppherd, J. T., *The Oedipus Tryannus of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1920), lines 21-30.

<sup>48</sup>Aripbron was a younger contemporary of Euripides (Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 846). One of his hymns is preserved in Athenæus, xv, 702. It was universally known in classical antiquity as Lucian attests (*Pro Lapsu inter Sal.*, 6, ed. Jacobitz).

<sup>49</sup>Girard, E., *L'Asklepeion d'Athène* (Paris, 1897), p. 40ff.

of the victim and sway his intellectual faculties.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the belief that epilepsy was sent as divine punishment by some of-

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<sup>50</sup>The conception of spirit-possession was never carried by the Greeks to the extent of Oriental practice. Yet there are plenty of indications that the belief, in a vague form at least, was there (Tambornino, *op. cit.*, p. 57). There appears also to have been a widespread belief that human beings could be possessed by the spirits of animals, and as a result suffer madness and other disorders. The story of Pandoreus and his daughters illustrates this well (Homer, *Od.*, xx, 66-78). According to the account preserved by Euthothius (On Homer, *Od.*, xix, p. 518, 1875) and an unknown scholiast on Homer (*Od.*, xx, vol. 2, p. 688, ed. Dindorf), Zeus had once a golden dog which guarded his sanctuary in Crete. Pandoreus stole the dog, but fearing to take the animal home, intrusted it for safe keeping to Tantalus, who lived on Mount Sipylus. When Zeus sent Hermes to demand the beast back, Tantalus swore he knew nothing about the dog. After a brief search, however, Hermes found it hidden in the house. Thereupon Zeus punished the perjurer by burying him under Mount Sipylus. Hearing of the fate of his accomplice, Pandoreus fled with his wife and daughters to Athens, and thence to Sicily. But Zeus saw them and slew both him and his wife. Upon the unhappy girls the angry deity set the terrible Harpies. These seized them and brought them to the Furies to become their slaves forever. But this was not enough. To make the maidens atone for their father's guilt Zeus smote them with canine rabies, called by the Greeks "dog." "This 'dog' disease," says Frazer, quoting Rocher (Pausanias, v, p. 381-2), "was probably a form of insanity which seems to have prevailed among many races and the essence of which consists in the patient imagining himself to be an animal and behaving as such. This sort of madness was known among the ancients as cynanthropic ('dog-man') or lycanthropic ('wolf-man') disease." An ancient treatise *On Melancholia*, preserved among the works of Galen (*Medic. Graec. Op.*, vol. xix, 719 ed. Kühn), states that "persons affected with cynanthropic and lycanthropic disease go out at night during the month of February, mimicking dogs and wolves in all respects, and they pass their time, until the break of day, grubbing among the graves. The disease affecting these sufferers can easily be recognized by the following symptoms: a sallow complexion, a haggard face, deeply sunken eyes, a dry tongue, a parched mouth, and ulcerated limbs." Frazer, still quoting Rocher, declares (*l. c.*) that on the same basis we can explain the story of the daughters of Proetus, who fancied themselves to be cows and bellowed in bovine fashion (see Virgil, *Ecl.*, vi, 48, with the note of Servius). Similarly he explains the action of the Bacchantes who clothed themselves in skins of beasts, tore live animals to pieces, and devoured the flesh raw as beasts do, and fondled and suckled wolf-cubs, fawns, and young panthers, as if they were their own offspring (compare Rocher, *Lex.* I, p. 1037, 2250). "Women," adds Frazer (*l. c.*), "were especially susceptible to such attacks of insanity in ancient times, just as modern Japanese women are liable to fox-madness."

fended divinity was so well-rooted, that Hippocrates and his followers were frequently repulsed in their attempt to eradicate the superstition. At times the Hippocratics and the priestly practitioners entered into the bitterest fight regarding the truth or falsehood of this belief. The latter held that the gods, and especially Selene,<sup>51</sup> were the direct cause of epilepsy; whereas the former maintained that these had nothing to do with it, and strove to prove that the malady was the result of physical causes. In their attacks upon the priests, the Hippocratics made lavish use of invectives and derisive epithets. "Those windbags and street-corner prophets," they cried, "who unblushingly pretend to heal epilepsy with their superstitious practice of purification and incantation, shrewdly striving to conceal their ignorance and incapacity under the mantle of divine protection!" To quote:

"Those who first conceived that Hiera Mania was sent as a visitation from the gods, were either ignorant fanatics, or conscious perpetrators of superstitions, or skillful cheats, the very kind of persons that the conjurors, purificators, and charlatans now are, who give themselves out for being excessively religious, as knowing more than other people. Such persons, then, using the divinity as a screen for their own inability to afford any assistance, have given out that the disease (epilepsy) is sacred. Adding suitable reason for this opinion, they have instituted a mode of treatment which is safe for themselves; namely, applying purification and incantations and enforcing abstinence from baths and many articles of food which are unwholesome to men in disease: of sea substances, the sur-mallet, the blacktail, the mullet, and the eel; for these, they say, are the fish most to be guarded against. And of flesh, the goat, the stag, the cow, and the hog; for these are the kinds of meat which cause the disorder of the bowels. Of fowls: the cock and the bustard, and such others that are reckoned particularly strong. And of potherbs:

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<sup>51</sup>Selene was believed to exercise strong influence upon the afflicted through her various phases (Rocher, W. H., *Selene und Verwandtes*, 4 vols., Leipzig, 1897, IV. p. 10ff). No doubt, the moon's action upon the tides, "the sleeplessness it causes, the restlessness of the insane under its occasional and refracting light"—all these made it easy to attribute to her the various forms of insanity (Rocher, *op. cit.*, IV. p. 69ff; Canway, *op. cit.*, I. p. 251f; cf. Iuvencus, *Evangel.*, i. 446).

mint, garlic, and onions; for what is acrid does not agree with a weak person. Moreover, they enjoin wearing a black robe, seeing that black is expressive of death. They also forbid patients to sleep on goat's skin, or wear it; and to put one foot upon another, or one hand upon another; for all these things are held by them to be hindrances to the cure. All these are enjoined with reference to their divinity, as if possessed of more knowledge; and announcing beforehand other portents, so that if the person should recover, theirs would be the honor and credit; and if he should die, they would have a certain defense, as if the gods, and not they, were to blame, since they had administered nothing either to eat or to drink as medicines, nor overheated him with baths, so as to prove the cause of what had happened."<sup>52</sup>

Here we discern the spirit of free inquiry and empiricism dashing itself fiercely against the barriers of superstition and priestcraft. For Hippocrates all diseases, even those considered sacred, as epilepsy, arose from natural causes and not through demoniacal or divine interference. This being the case, a disease must be cured by natural processes without recourse to magic, the devices of faith-healing, or gods. For him, those who thought and acted otherwise were to be considered the foes of the true deity and an obstacle in the way of scientific progress and discovery. To quote again:

"For, if these quacks profess to know how to bring down the moon by incantation, and darken the sun, and induce storm or fine weather or rain, or droughts, and make the sea and the land unproductive, and so forth, whether they arrogate this power as being derived from the mysteries or any other knowledge or consideration, they appear to me to practice impiety, and either fancy that there are no gods, or, if there are, that they have no ability to ward off any of the greatest evils. How, then, are not these men enemies of the gods? For if a man by magical arts and sacrifices thinks he can bring down the moon,<sup>53</sup> darken the

<sup>52</sup>Translation by Francis Adams, *Hippocrates*, II. p. 335. Compare Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v. Hippocrates*, pp. 1826ff.

<sup>53</sup>Among the ancients this was considered a common exploit of the witches. See Tibul., *El.*, i, 2; Hor., *Epod.*, xvii, and especially Tavenner, *Roman Moon Lore*, *Washington University Studies*, vol. viii. *Humanistic Series*, No. 1, pp. 39-59 (St. Louis, 1920).

sun, induce storms, cause fair weather, I should believe that there was nothing divine or supernatural in all this, but human, provided the power of the divine were overpowered by tried human knowledge and subjected to it."<sup>54</sup>

Hippocrates is relentless in his attack upon those who taught the belief in disease-demons, and their charlatan cures. Their acts he brands as criminal, for "by such sayings and doings they profess to be possessed of superior knowledge, and deceive mankind by enjoining lustrations and purifications upon them while their discourse turns upon the divinity and godhead."<sup>55</sup>

(5) PAN AND MADNESS.—But better known and more feared than Selene was the forest god Pan. Next to Zeus and Apollo, this goatlike divinity held a most noted place in the theology and imagination of the Hellenic folk. His activities extended over a wide range, but he was chiefly known as the inspirer of unreasonable fear and madness. His principal seat of worship was in Arcadia. Thence it spread throughout Greece but was not introduced into Athens until the battle of Marathon.<sup>56</sup> In Arcadia, as the divinity of forests, pasture, flocks, and the protector of shepherds, he dwelt in grottoes<sup>57</sup> or wandered over the mountains, rocks, and valleys, amusing himself with the chase or leading the dance of the nymphs.<sup>58</sup> It was his joy to increase and watch over the flocks and herds of the faithful worshippers.<sup>59</sup> He also guided and protected hunters<sup>60</sup> and fishermen.<sup>61</sup>

But, perhaps, the modern word "panic," understood in its

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<sup>54</sup>Adams, Hippocrates, II, p. 336ff. The writer has been unable to find a passage in which Hippocrates directly attacks the priests for their medical quackery. The above quotation offers merely an indirect proof of their unreliability.

<sup>55</sup>Adams, Hippocrates, *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Virgil, *Eclog.*, x. 26.

<sup>57</sup>Euripides, *Ion*, 500-502.

<sup>58</sup>Æschylus, *Persæ*, 443f; *Homeric Hymns*, xix, 6. 13, 19-21.

<sup>59</sup>Ovid, *Fasti*, ii, 271, 277; Virgil, *Eclog.*, ii, 33.

<sup>60</sup>Hesychius, *s. v. Agreus*.

<sup>61</sup>Theocritus, v. 15.

pathological sense, best describes those functions of Pan with which we are directly concerned. If the god were slighted or disturbed in his noonday rest,<sup>62</sup> he would become exceedingly indignant and wreak his wrath upon the offenders. Thus he would suddenly emerge from the thick woods and startle with violent terror the irreverent hunters who had failed to do him homage before venturing within his haunts,<sup>63</sup> or he would strike his victims with paralyzing fear by means of his overpowering voice.<sup>64</sup> Even the Titans, it is said, in their struggle with the gods, were conquered in a battle by his thundering shouts.<sup>65</sup> It was also to punish the irreverent Persians and help his devoted Athenians, that Pan approached Pheidippides on his dash to Sparta, promising that if the Athenians would agree to build him a shrine, he would instill into the barbarians' hearts a maddening fear.<sup>66</sup>

The classic example of the activity of Pan as the sender of insanity is to be found in the story graphically related by Pausanias. During one of the many encounters between the invading hordes of the Gauls and the Greeks, which took place under a fierce storm,

"while the earth quaked violently . . . and the thunders rolled and the lightning flashed constantly, the claps of the thunder stunning the huge Celts and hindering them from hearing the command, there appeared to aid the Greeks, besides the element of nature, the phantoms of the heroes Hyperochus, Loadocus, and Phyrus. Before the Gauls could recover, they were smitten with a maddening, paralyzing fear caused by Pan. It was late in the evening when this madness arose in the barbarian army, and at first it was a mere handful who lost their heads, fancying they heard the trampling of charging horses and the onset of foemen. But soon the delusion spread to the whole army. So they snatched at their arms, and, taking sides, dealt death and received it. For they understood not their

<sup>62</sup>Theocritus, i, 16f.

<sup>63</sup>Euripides, *Rhesus*, 36f.

<sup>64</sup>Valerius Flaccus, iii, 43-57.

<sup>65</sup>Pseudo-Eratosthenes, *Catasterismoi*, 27.

<sup>66</sup>Herodotus, vi, 105.

mother tongue, nor perceived each others' forms and the shapes of their bucklers, both sides alike in their present infatuation, believing that their adversaries were Greeks, that their arms were Greek, and that the language they spoke was Greek. So the god-sent-madness wrought very great slaughter among the Gauls at the hand of each other."<sup>67</sup>

(6) THE EVIL EYE.—From the earliest times the eye *per se* has been regarded as an instrument of evil and as having wholly maleficent effect. Its power was believed to be such that it could consume its victim as with fire.<sup>68</sup> It created the burning feeling of jealousy and the base passion of hatred through which many lost happiness and life.<sup>69</sup> Not a few of the intellectuals of the Hellenistic period believed the evil eye a stupid survival of old superstitions. But the majority, even of the educated class, held that it really had the power to inflict injury and cause disease.

The arguments for and against the power of the evil eye were brought out at a banquet given by a certain Metrius Florus at which Plutarch, who relates the arguments, was present. One of the persons invited made the remark that the belief in the evil eye was sheer nonsense and that its existence had no basis in truth. Thereupon the host, who was a pronounced believer in it, stated his reasons for believing it and showed that his convictions were authenticated by facts. Then he added:

"Because we cannot give a reason for the thing, it does not follow we must reject its effect as absurd, for there are a thousand things which evidently are, the reason for which we cannot readily find. . . . The cause why anything is true must be discovered; yet this is not always possible. Thus children being plastic and soft easily fall before the power of the evil eye . . . and Phylarchus tells that the Thibians, the old inhabitants about Pontus, through their evil eye proved that they not only could destroy children but the adults as well. For those whom they looked or breathed upon, suddenly fell ill, languished, and died. Now if the effects of the evil eye upon the body are pernicious,

<sup>67</sup>Pausanias, x, 23. 3-5.

<sup>68</sup>Daremberg et Saglio, *s. v. Fascinum*, and Hastings' *Encycl. Rel. and Ethics*, *s. v. Evil Eye*.

<sup>69</sup>Hesychius, *s. v. ophthalmiasai*.

those upon the soul are totally ruinous, for they fill it with all the debauchery of passions which lead to utter destruction."<sup>70</sup>

But the master worker of the evil eye in the popular fancy was Medusa.<sup>71</sup> She was one of three female monsters, daughters of Phorcys and Ceto, known individually as Stenusa, Euryale, and Medusa, and collectively as the Gorgons.<sup>72</sup> According to Æschylus these sisters had wings and brazen claws, and enormous teeth.<sup>73</sup> Of the three Medusa alone was mortal. She was at first a fair and beautiful maiden, whose winsomeness won men's hearts, but soon she lost all her attractiveness. For Athena changed her flowing hair into dangling serpents, because she had become a mother by Poseidon of Chrysaor and Pegasus in one of Athena's temples.<sup>74</sup> Her head, once so beautiful, was now so hideous to look upon, that on whomsoever fell her fatal glance was instantly turned into a stone.<sup>75</sup> She became so famous as a *jettatrice* that her very name struck terror in the hearts of the populace. All the surviving portraits of her describe her with eyes fiercely staring, wide, grinning mouth, showing wolf-like fangs, and a protruded tongue split down the center.<sup>76</sup> But once her head was severed by Perseus through the devices given him by the Maiden Goddess, Medusa ceased to inflict evil and became in turn a mighty power against the workers of the evil eye.<sup>77</sup> Henceforth her ugly image was put on doorposts, walls and other places where it could be readily seen. "No other object," says Elworthy,<sup>78</sup> "has had anything like so many represen-

<sup>70</sup>Plutarch, *Symposiacs*, v, 7. 1-3. Translation substantially that of Goodwin.

<sup>71</sup>Elworthy, F. T., *A Solution of the Gorgon Myth*, in *Folk-Lore*, xiv (1903), p. 212-242, where numerous illustrations are given.

<sup>72</sup>Hesiod, *Theog.*, 278f; cf. Apollodorus, ii, 4. 2.

<sup>73</sup>Æschylus, *Prom.*, 794; *Choeph.*, 1050.

<sup>74</sup>Hesiod, *Theog.*, 287ff.

<sup>75</sup>The views expressed in this paragraph are substantially those of Elworthy, *The Gorgon Myth*, l. c.

<sup>76</sup>Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, in Hastings' *Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, q. v.

<sup>77</sup>Even a lock of her hair would turn the ill-wishers into stone. (See Pausanias, viii, 47. 4; cf. Apollodorus, ii, 7. 3.)

<sup>78</sup>*The Gorgon Myth*, p. 217.



tations in all kinds of materials and in all kinds of places. Indeed the original myth, whencesoever its origin, brought by the immigrants to Magna Græcia, so established itself there that in Pompeii, and even now in modern Italy, it is still the favorite and by far the commonest device upon the boss, to be seen on house doors, round which the knocker swings. The notion is, as it has ever been, to provide an antidote to the first malignant glance; no place thus could be so appropriate as the outside of the door of a house, where every visitor must inevitably look first upon it."

Overpraise generally invited the evil eye. Heliodorus<sup>79</sup> relates that a certain Greek girl fell ill. Upon being asked what the trouble was, she replied that her blooming beauty had brought upon her the lavish praise of an admiring multitude. In the crowd, she continued, there were those who possessed the evil eye, and being envious of her winning charms, struck her with a wasting disease. And Plutarch states that the possessor of the evil eye infects the air with a malign influence and this penetrates the eye, the nostrils, and the breath of the intended victim and carries with it the bitterness and hatred of the envy with which it is surcharged.<sup>80</sup>

The prophylactics against the evil eye were many. They varied from simple amulets, such as the *abaskantos*,<sup>81</sup> the *bas-kaniās pharmakion*,<sup>82</sup> the *probaskanion*,<sup>83</sup> and the *phylacteria*,<sup>84</sup> to exorcism.<sup>85</sup> A good example of the latter was the practice of spitting. Theocritus<sup>86</sup> describes the manner in which it is done:

"For in truth I am not as hideous as they say! But lately I

<sup>79</sup>Heliod., *Theogenes and Chariclea* (Trans., 1789), vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>80</sup>Plutarch, *Symp.*, v, 7. 3.

<sup>81</sup>Dioscorides, *Mat. Med.* iii; cf. Plutarch, *Symp.*, v, 7.

<sup>82</sup>Aristotle, *Problem*, xx, c 34.

<sup>83</sup>Heliodorus *Aeth.*, iii, p. 140.

<sup>84</sup>Dioscorides, *Mat. Med.*, v, 159; cf. Plutarch, *Phil.*, ii, 378ff.

<sup>85</sup>The act of expectorating must be interpreted as an effort to expel the malign influence or evil spirit.

<sup>86</sup>Theocritus, vi, 34ff. Translation by A. Lang (London, 1909). See also the article *Saliva* in Hastings' *Encyc. of Rel. and Eth.*, and Frank W. Nicolson, *The Saliva Superstition in Classical Literature*, in *Harvard Studies*, viii (1897), 23ff.

was looking into the sea when all was calm; beautiful seemed my beard, beautiful my one eye—as I count beauty—and the sea reflected the gleam of my teeth whiter than the Parian stone. Then, all to shun the evil eye, I did spit thrice in my breasts; for this spell was taught me by the crone Cottydaris, that piped of yore to the reapers in Hippocoon's field."

This custom lives to-day. The traveler Dodwell, while visiting the island of Corcyra, met with a strange experience. As he strolled about the island admiring the landscape and the splendid cottage of his host, he saw two boys frolicking about. They were the children of the innkeeper. Their fine physical build, their nimbleness, and their gracious manners drew out of him expressions of admiration and praise. An old woman, the grandmother of the boys, heard the traveler's remarks and was alarmed. She dragged the boys to him and requested him to spit in their faces at once. He declined, but this brought out the parents of the youngsters and under their pressure he had to yield. Thus the evil eye was averted.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Dodwell, E., *Tour Through Greece*, 2 vols. (London, 1819), p. 35f.

## CHAPTER II

### ROMAN CONCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF DISEASE

#### I. *Roman Views Regarding Evil Spirits*

ROMAN religion, more than any other religion of antiquity, possessed the genius for creating gods. In its early stage it was purely animistic and saw resident in every object of nature, both visible and invisible, an active deity, or *numen*.<sup>88</sup> But despite this capacity for creation, it never established a hierarchy of spirits, good or bad, after the manner of Oriental cults. Moreover, the *numina* themselves were not deities endowed with a personality and individuality, but mere functual powers, possessed of a will to do good or evil.<sup>89</sup> However, when Rome passed under the spell of Hellenic influence, these dim *numina* began gradually to assume anthropomorphic form and more or less a distinct personality.<sup>90</sup>

The early Romans, in common with all the peoples of ancient times, divided their spirit-world into good and bad. The divinities that dwelt within the boundaries of the household or state, such as the Penates or the Lares, were looked upon as friendly and helpful; on the other hand, those whose residence was outside, as Sylvanus, hostile and dangerous.<sup>91</sup> Very naturally, the evil spirits constantly tried to penetrate within the pro-

<sup>88</sup>De-Marchi, A., *Il Culto privato di Roma antica*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1896), I, p. 27ff.

<sup>89</sup>For detailed treatment of this subject cf. Fowler, W. W., *Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London, 1911), Lect. VI.

<sup>90</sup>Fowler, *op. cit.* Lect. VII, especially note 7. The nearest approach the early Romans made to personalizing deities was in the case of Iuno (see Carter, J. B., *The Religion of Numa*, London, 1906, p. 12). But even this goddess was merely a generalization and a glorification of the separate *iunones* (Reid, J. S., *Roman Demons and Spirits*, in *Hastings' Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, p. 620f).

<sup>91</sup>Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

tected area of the home or state;<sup>92</sup> and it was to prevent this entrance and to avoid possible harm that the boundary was made sacred and inviolable by annual rites of sacrifice and prayer.<sup>93</sup>

The most important organism of Roman society, at once sacred and perpetual, was the family with the *paterfamilias* as priest and leader.<sup>94</sup> It was therefore the chief concern of the latter to protect his household not only from human enemies but also from the evil influence of hostile spirits. Especially liable to the attacks of demons were newborn babies and dying persons, and it was thought necessary to protect them from the malign interference of spirits. Accordingly such persons were guarded by special rites of purification or disinfection.<sup>95</sup> For this reason the boys were purified on the ninth, girls on the eighth day after birth. This day was called the "*dies lustricus, quo infantes lustrantur et nomen accipiunt.*"<sup>96</sup> In historical times the purificatory part of the rite lost its original significance and became subordinated in importance to the ceremony of naming the child. Yet, judging by the mystic value attached to the name<sup>97</sup> of a person, the *dies lustricus* may have retained much of its original purificatory power. Again, this ceremony of cleansing was repeated when the child reached the age of puberty. For it was universally believed that a boy passing through this stage of his life was particularly susceptible to the attack of evil spirits. In later time the Romans discarded this ceremony altogether, but it

<sup>92</sup>The Roman state was a mere enlargement of the family (Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 12).

<sup>93</sup>Fowler, *Rel. Exp.*, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup>Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>95</sup>It is a universal belief in primitive society that both the mother at childbirth and the newborn infant are unclean and therefore taboo (Fowler, *Rel. Exper.*, p. 28; cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, III, pp. 145-157).

<sup>96</sup>Macrobius, *Saturn.*, i, 16. 36 (Eyssenhartd); De-Marchi, *La religione nella vita domestica*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1897), I, p. 169ff.; see also Samter, Ernst, *Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 62ff., where the *dies lustricus* is paralleled with the Hellenic *amphidromia*. The ceremony is further discussed by Crawley, E., *The Mystic Rose: a Study in Primitive Marriage* (London and New York, 1902), p. 435.

<sup>97</sup>See Hastings' *Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, s. v. *Name* (Indo-European); cf. Frazer, G. B., III, ch. vi, especially pp. 337, 382f., 387ff.

survived to some extent in the custom of laying aside the *toga virilis*.<sup>98</sup> Finally the *dies lustricus* was celebrated after a death. At such a time the Romans believed the family in danger and therefore in need of purification. The reason for this fear is to be found in the notion that a dead body was easily invaded by an evil spirit from which could be spread contagion and disease. It was to frustrate the demon's activities that the *dies lustricus* was celebrated anew.<sup>99</sup> The ceremony at this time consisted of placing branches of cypress over the doorpost of the house to give warning to any passerby and especially the *pontifex* not to come in.<sup>100</sup> Those who followed or carried the coffin were rendered immune from evil influence by being sprinkled with water and by stepping over fire.<sup>101</sup>

Like the child and the corpse, the women were also liable to fall under the infection of malign forces, especially during pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>102</sup> At such a time they were regarded as a source of infection, and on this account they were kept away from certain ceremonies to which they might impart the contagion with which they were affected. Among the *sacra privata* Cato has left us a formula for the propitiation of Mars Sylvanus, whose *numen*, unless propitiated, was thought to work harm upon the farmer. The rite was performed *in silva* ostensibly to protect the cattle and the flocks which had been turned out to pasture in the woods. During the ceremony no woman was allowed to be present nor was she permitted to look on from a distance.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, even in the *sacra publica* there were rites which women could not attend. For instance, all women were excluded from

<sup>98</sup>Fowler, *Roman Festivals* (London, 1908), p. 56. Compare De-Marchi, *La religione nella vita domestica*, I, p. 176, and Crawley, *Mystic Rose*, ch. xiii.

<sup>99</sup>Marquardt, J., *Römische Privataltertümer* (Leipzig, 1864-1867), p. 337ff.

<sup>100</sup>Servius, *ad Aen.*, iii, 64. For other references consult De-Marchi, *La religione nella vita domestica*, I, p. 190; Genep, van Arnold, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, 1909), ch. ii.

<sup>101</sup>Festus, p. 3 (Hugoni), "itaque funus prosecuti redeuntes ignem supra gradiebantur aqua aspersi, quod purgationis genus vocabant sufficionem."

<sup>102</sup>Frazer, *G. B.*, III, p. 145ff.

<sup>103</sup>Cato, *Res Rustica*, 83, "mulier ad eam rem divinam ne adsit neve videat quomodo fiat."

the cult of Hercules at the Ara Maxima, nor were they permitted to swear in the name of that god.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, there were public sacrifices which both *mulieres* and *virgines* were forbidden to attend,<sup>105</sup> because, it was thought, they might be attacked by malign powers.

Other protective measures taken against evil spirits are seen in the custom in accordance with which a man coming back home from a distant country entered his house not through the door but through an opening on the roof. The door was deemed a danger point which must never be exposed to the evil spirits. The man thus coming back from a distant land might be a ghost in disguise or may have evil spirits with him.<sup>106</sup> For this reason a curious ceremony was celebrated at the doorway, the details of which have been preserved by St. Augustine:

"Three men go about the house at night. They first strike the threshold with an axe, then with a pestle, and finally sweep it with a broom. This is done to keep Sylvanus from entering and tormenting the mother and the babe."<sup>107</sup>

Perhaps the practice of carrying a dead man through the door with his feet foremost, so that he could not find his way back, and of burying him at night, related to the same belief.<sup>108</sup>

More definitely evil, more essentially local, were the angry spirits of the departed mortals. The Romans of the regal and of the early republican periods regarded the unappeased souls of the dead as most dangerous to public and private welfare. They were capable of inflicting not only disease upon men, but blight

<sup>104</sup>Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 60. Dogs were also kept away (ib. 90); cf. Gellius, xi, 6. 2 (Hertz), "In veteribus scriptis neque mulieres Romanae per Herculem deiurant neque viri per Castorem." Compare Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 194 and *Rom. Rel. Exper.*, p. 29.

<sup>105</sup>Festus, s. v. *Exesto*.

<sup>106</sup>Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 5. See further MacCulloch, *The Door in Hastings' Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, IV, pp. 846-852.

<sup>107</sup>St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, vi, 9.

<sup>108</sup>De-Marchi, *La religione nella vita domestica*, I, p. 188ff.; Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, where many illustrations are given. The gates of the city, like the door of the house, had to be protected in the same way.

on the crops.<sup>109</sup> Hence the worship of the ancestors became one of the most important functions in the religious life of the people. The central motive in this worship was not love for the departed, but fear. It was believed that unless the disincarnate spirits were brought to permanent rest in the lower world, they would work no end of mischief.<sup>110</sup> Once they were placed there by due burial and propitiation, they could not come up, except at stated intervals and on special occasions, and at such a time religion provided for their pacification.<sup>111</sup> The rite of the dead became so necessary that Cicero, quoting an old law, urged his fellow countrymen never to cease sacrificing to the dead, but to continue the ceremony perpetually.<sup>112</sup> The spirits of the nether world created such a fear in the heart of the public that, to appease them and prevent them from destroying the crops and harvest, a sow (*porca praecidaneae*) was sacrificed to Tellus by the person who had not given the dead his due.<sup>113</sup>

## 2. *The Striges*

However, the beings which took the most prominent place in the mind of the Roman as horrible agents of destruction and disease were the *striges*.<sup>114</sup> The *strix* was a female creature assuming multiform shapes, the most common of which was that of the bat. She was conceived as having nocturnal habits and as the harbinger of evil. Her chief delight was to satisfy her insatiable craving for human flesh and blood.<sup>115</sup> Mothers especially dreaded her, because the *strix* was thought to cause all the various forms of infantile disorders, by her continuous visitation of the

<sup>109</sup>Carter, *Ancestor Worship*, *passim*, Hastings' *Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, pp. 461-466.

<sup>110</sup>Tertullian, *De Anima*, 56.

<sup>111</sup>Carter, *l. c.*

<sup>112</sup>Cicero, *de Legibus*, ii, 22.

<sup>113</sup>Carter, *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>Oliphant, S. G., *The Story of the Strix: Ancient*, in *Transactions of Am. Phil. Ass'n*, 44 (1913), pp. 133-149; *ibid.*, 45 (1914), pp. 63-69.

<sup>115</sup>Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 819-821, "sed strigibus vivis convivis intestina quae exedint."

nursery.<sup>116</sup> Ovid<sup>117</sup> gives the following description: The *striges* are ugly ravenous fowls, with huge heads, bewitching eyes, and claws fit for plunder. They fly by night seeking infants unwatched by the nurse. Through malevolence and spite they snatch the little ones clandestinely from their cradles and befoul their tender bodies in various manners. At times they devour the poor little things, first tearing them apart with their talons and beaks and then gorging themselves on their flesh and blood. After this description he tells the following tale:

"When Procas, child of the Latin king, was but five days old, these striges, slipping into his chamber, flew to his cradle and began to suck his heart's blood. The nurse, absent at the moment, heard his cries and ran to his aid. She found on the infant's tender cheeks the traces of their cruel claws. His color was already that of the sere and withered leaf on the approach of winter. Forthwith she ran to the nymph Carna<sup>118</sup> and besought her aid. Carna assured her of the safety of her charge and accompanied her to the cradle. After bidding the sorrowing parents to stay their tears, as she would find a remedy, she thrice in due order touched the jambs of the door and thrice its threshold with the leafy branch of an arbutus tree. Then with water made potent by a drug placed in it, she sprinkled the entrance, and, taking in her hands the entrails of a pig, two months old, she spoke this conjuration: 'Spare ye birds of the night, the vitals of the child. Take heart for heart, I pray, entrails for entrails. This life we give to you in lieu of the better one.' She laid these in the open air and allowed no one to look at them. Then she placed in the window the twig of a white thorn (*spina alba*), which Ianus had given her, and then the birds could no more come in. After this the child regained his color."<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup>Baerens, Emil, *Poeta Latini Minores* (Leipzig, 1910), III, 155, c. lviii, vv, 1035-8.

<sup>117</sup>Ovid, *Fasti*, vi, 131ff.

<sup>118</sup>Carna or Carnea, whose name is probably connected with *caro*, flesh, was regarded as the protector of the physical well-being of man. She watched especially over the heart, the lungs, and the liver, the organs without which man cannot exist. See Macrobius, *Saturn.*, i, 12, and Ovid, *Fasti*, vi, 101ff., who, however, confounds Cardea with Carna. For a fuller treatment of Carna see Tavenner, *Notes on the Development of Early Roman Religion*, *Classical Weekly*, vol. xi, p. 97ff.

<sup>119</sup>Translation by Oliphant in *op. cit.*, vol. 44 (1913), pp. 133-149.



This was the superstitious way of explaining children's disorders, such as convulsions resulting from teething or overfeeding, anemia, and the sudden rise of temperature. These beliefs are still alive to-day in many parts of Italy, and the prophylactics are not materially different.

### 3. *The Disease-Demons*

A more superior and deadly power were the disease-demons. They had come from Greece and the East.<sup>120</sup> Plutarch states that it was the philosopher Xenocrates who first formulated the theory of the disease-spirits. The philosopher is reported as teaching that it is inconceivable that "the unlucky days and festivals, with their scourgings and fasts, their lamentations and lacerations, their impure words and deeds, are celebrated in honor of the blessed gods and good demons. They are rather in honor of the powerful and terrible spirits of evil in the air, whose dark and sinister character is perpetuated by such unholy and gloomy rites. These rites are performed to propitiate the demons in the hope that they may be induced not to work mischief."<sup>121</sup> These deadly spirits assert their vast powers, and display their malevolence in various ways. Not only are they the authors of the most destructive plagues, of the most frightful diseases, of dearth and all other desolating convulsions of the physical world, but they also, by their influence and acts, prostitute and debase the soul of mankind. One of these deadly divinities was Typhon. Plutarch<sup>122</sup> describes thus his activities:

"He, moved with envy and spite, perpetrated the most wicked and terrible things. By putting all things into confusion, Typhon filled both land and sea with infinite calamities and evil."

### 4. *The Deification of Diseases*

Besides this general and vague belief that evil spirits caused disease as well as other human misfortunes, the Romans, like

<sup>120</sup>Hastings' *Encyclop. of Rel. and Eth.*, s. v. *Roman Spirits and Demons*.

<sup>121</sup>Plutarch, *de Is. et Os.*, 26.

<sup>122</sup>Plutarch, *de Is. et Os.*, 27.

the Greeks, personified and deified the diseases themselves.<sup>123</sup> The deification of disease probably sprang from the desire to anthropomorphize and make concrete not only thoughts and ideas, but human passions and the invisible physical forces as well. Behind all bodily and mental troubles there stood, it was believed, a deity, which was considered at once the author and the averter of that disease. Cicero<sup>124</sup> exhorts the people to beware of the divinities endowed with such powers. He urges that these gods be placated with solemn religious rites to avoid arousing their terrible anger.

In Rome the chief of these deities was Febris, the only one for which we have adequate historical and literary evidence. The fearful toll exacted every year by malarial fevers, caused by the pestilential marshes of the Campagna, was ascribed to her. Indeed, so dreaded was the goddess that the suffering population built her temples and worshiped her in order to win her favor and help. Valerius Maximus, while engaged in a discussion of ancient Roman customs and usage, remarks:

"Other gods, indeed, they used to adore for their good deeds; Fever, on the other hand, they worshiped in their temples in order to render her less harmful. Of these temples one is still extant, on the Palatine, another in the court of the Marian monuments, and a third at the top of Vicus Longus. To these temples they used to bring and deposit the amulets which had been formerly attached to the bodies of the patients."<sup>125</sup>

These temples were undoubtedly very old, pointing to the fact that the cult of the goddess had been established very early. In the time of Pliny the Elder the one on the Palatine was in good condition and kept at public expense. The encyclopædist, making light of the divine attributes of the disease divinities, says:

<sup>123</sup>For a scholarly discussion on this point see Tavenner, E., *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature* (New York, 1916), p. 67ff., and also his excellent *Notes on the Development of Early Roman Religion in Classical Weekly*, vol. xi, pp. 97-103, especially pp. 100-102. The substance of this section is largely based on Dr. Tavenner's work.

<sup>124</sup>Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, iii, 63-64 (Ernesti).

<sup>125</sup>Valerius Maximus, ii, 5. 6.

"We have discovered innumerable divinities, we have divided the gods of the nether world into two classes, we have done likewise with the diseases and many pestilences, with the one desire that we may tremblingly placate them. And so a shrine has been dedicated on the Palatine to Fever, even at public expense."<sup>126</sup>

According to Ammianus Marcellinus,<sup>127</sup> people flocked to these sanctuaries. Here they brought the amulets which had been suspended on the bodies of the fever-stricken patients and in which they no longer believed, since the miraculous goddess was more powerful and efficacious than they. Yet there were times when the great Febris could not be moved by prayer and supplication to heal the sick. To these Pliny<sup>128</sup> sincerely recommends the use of the old-fashioned, but very helpful, amulets. The Febris cult must have been widespread, as the evidences show.<sup>129</sup> She was known by different names, *dea tertiana* and *dea quartana*.

There were other deified diseases besides Febris, as is indicated by the passage of Pliny just quoted. But the evidence for these is not specific. There was a Dea Mefitis, but we do not know what her particular office was.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>126</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii, 15-16.

<sup>127</sup>xix, 12. 14.

<sup>128</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxx, 98.

<sup>129</sup>*C. I. L.* VII, 999; *C. I. L.* XII, 3129, and other references are found in Wissowa, B. G., *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 246ff.

<sup>130</sup>See Tavenner's *Notes* in *Classical Weekly*, xi, pp. 101-2.

**PART II**  
**THE CURES**



## CHAPTER I

### THE APPEAL TO THE GODS

#### I. *The Apotropaic Ritual*

It was but natural for a people, steeped in such superstitious beliefs as those sketched in the preceding pages, to turn to supernatural means and agents to cure them of their ills. Since all disorders, both physical and mental, were thought to arise from the interference of evil spirits, it followed that relief could be obtained only by eliminating that interference, either by placating the powers of evil or by securing the help of the kindly deities. To the former men were driven by fear, to the latter they came as suppliants in their hour of need. This twofold principle led the Greeks from very early time to develop a twofold form of ritual. One of these embodies the sentiments of thanksgiving and praise to the "mild and humane" gods; the other was a ceremony for exorcising demons, called by the Greeks *apotropé*, or expulsion.<sup>1</sup> Isocrates distinguishes the two rituals as follows:

"Those of the gods who are to us the source of all good things have the title of Olympians; those whose department is that of sending calamities and punishments, go by harsher names. To the first class, both private persons and states erect altars and build temples, to the second, no worship is offered, either in the form of prayers or burnt-offerings. In their case we simply perform the ceremony of *apotropé*."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The word *apotropé* has no exact equivalent in English. It may mean either "turning ourselves away from the (evil) thing" or "turning the evil thing away from us." Harrison (*Prolegomena*, p. 10) suggests the words "aversion" and "riddance," but adds that these are too personal and express no ritual connection. When used in a ritualistic sense the Greek has generally, either expressed or understood, the word *kakôn*. Cf. Æschylus, *Per.*, 217; Euripides, *Helen.*, 360; Plato, *Protag.*, 354B.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted and translated by Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 8. Cf. Pausanias, ii, 11. 2. See further Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 249, n. 1 and Rocher, *s. v. Olympioi Theoi* for a discussion of the office and powers of the Olympians.

Thus the ritual of the good deities consisted in burnt offering, prayers, and agonistic games conducted in or about the temples and altars dedicated to them. The ritual of the gods of evil, on the other hand, had none of these. To them were performed only the ceremonies familiar to the Greek under the significant name of *apopompai*,<sup>3</sup> "sendings away," or, more correctly, "expulsions." Whatever evil might befall a man, either in the form of an ungodly thought, that is, the desire to commit sacrilege, or in the form of disease, he was bidden to go straightway through the ritual of *apotropé*. Plato<sup>4</sup> urges the citizen thus smitten to "betake yourself to the ceremonies of expulsion, to go as suppliant to the shrines of the gods of *apotropé*, to fly from the company of wicked men without turning back."

We, moreover, learn from Harpocration<sup>5</sup> that Apollodorus devoted the sixth book of his treatise, *Concerning the Gods*, to the discussion of how to avert the powers of evil and disease. The book unfortunately is lost. But the practice of annual purification and of exorcising malevolent spirits was quite general. This is attested by Pausanias,<sup>6</sup> who saw in distant Titane an altar in front of which stood a memorial to the hero Epopeus, and remarks that "near the grave are the Averting Gods: beside their image are performed the ceremonies which the Greeks observe for the purpose of averting evil." Now the heroes were spirits of the nether world and were generally regarded as evil, and should the worshiper, through inadvertence or ignorance, forget this fact, the chthonian deity promptly disclosed his error. Thus Babrius<sup>7</sup> relates how in a courtyard of a pious man, there stood a shrine to a hero. Here, on the altar, the saintly man was wont to offer sacrifice and pour holy libations in homage to the hero, at the same time praying to the god to grant him favors for his hospitality and devotion. Thereupon the ghost of the dead hero

<sup>3</sup>The terms *apotropé* and *apopompé* appear to have been used interchangeably. Cf. Suidas, s. v. *apopompaioi*; Harpocration, s. v. *apopompas*.

<sup>4</sup>Plato, *Laws*, 854B.

<sup>5</sup>Harpocration, l. c.

<sup>6</sup>Pausanias, ii, 11. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Babrius, *Fabulae*, 63.

felt honor-bound to undeceive the man, since he knew his activities were limited to do evil only. So in the dead of the night he appeared to his worshiper and ordered him to desist, since, he said, "no hero may give anything good. For such a thing you must go to the good gods. We are the givers of all things evil that exist for mortal men."<sup>8</sup>

## 2. *The Anthesteria and Lemuria*

The final ceremonies of the festival of Anthesteria were usually of an apotropaic character. In fact, all the previous celebrations were performed with a view to culminating in the ritual of expulsion, executed on behalf of the community and the domestic circle.

The Anthesteria was a three-day celebration to Dionysus. The first day was that of Pithoigoi, or Cask-opening. It was so called, as Plutarch states,<sup>9</sup> because at this time the new wine was broached. It was an ancient custom, he goes on to say, to offer some of it as a libation to the gods before the Athenian drank it, praying that the wine might prove a wholesome and beneficial drug. When the casks were opened the revel set in, and extended to the following day—the Day of Choes (Cups). The third day was the Day of Chytroi or Pots.<sup>10</sup> The Day of Pots closed with an apotropaic ritual, the purpose of which, as we have seen, was to purge the people of evil influences and drive out of the city the spirits of infection and disease. The formula of the ceremony is partly preserved for us by Suidas.<sup>11</sup> It ran thus: "Out of the doors! ye Keres, spirits of evil; it is no longer Anthesteria," implying, Suidas adds, "that in Anthesteria, the evil ones were free to roam at large through the city." At the same time, as a sure prophylactic against their deleterious interference, the people were ordered by the priests to carry in their hands

<sup>8</sup>A similar distinction was made by Hippocrates (*On Dreams*, 639 Littré).

<sup>9</sup>Plutarch, *Symp.*, iii, 7. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Daremberg et Saglio, *s. v.* *Dionysia*.

<sup>11</sup>Suidas, *s. v.* *Anthesteria*.



leaves of buckthorn, which they were to chew. In addition to this, the window sills and doorposts of every dwelling were to be smeared with pitch. Pitch was so employed in the naïve belief that the feet of the demons would become stuck in it and thus be arrested.<sup>12</sup>

The buckthorn played an important part not only as a preventive, but also as a curative remedy against the evil spirits and the disease they inflicted. The plant was supposed to possess great laxative and purgative properties, as well as magical power. It was universally believed that its application, both external and internal, would cause the ready expulsion of the disease-demons that had found their way into the body. Indeed, the view was current that by chewing the substance of anything one would thereby assimilate its virtues and power. Thus the priestess of Apollo chewed the laurel leaf both for the purpose of ejecting the spirit of evil and of obtaining the inspiration from the god.<sup>13</sup> Dioscorides<sup>14</sup> was one among many who recognized the sanative and prophylactic value of the buckthorn. He declared that branches of this plant attached to doors or hung up outside act as a deterrent against malevolent divinities. Rather infrequently pitch was used for similar purposes. Photius<sup>15</sup> says that if the doorposts are covered with a coat of pitch at the birth of a child, the spirits of infection will keep away, knowing that they cannot pass through without being caught.

The rites of the Lemuria, like those of the Anthesteria, were essentially apotropaic. Their main purpose was the exorcism of maleficent spirits.<sup>16</sup> The Romans believed these spirits to be the

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<sup>12</sup>Photius, *s. v. miara hemera*.

<sup>13</sup>Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 39. Cf. Palladius, *De re rustica*, i, 35. 1-2 and Columella, *De re rustica*, x, 335-350, where the *vitis alba* was similarly used among the Romans. Ovid, *Fasti*, vi, 129-130, tells us that the *spina alba* was used to drive away the evil shades of night. See further, Frazer, *G. B.*, I, Part II, p. 191, and De Nino, A., *Usi e Costumi Abruzzesi*, 6 vols. (Milan, 1886), I, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup>Dioscorides, *Mat. Med.*, i, 119.

<sup>15</sup>Photius, *s. v. rhamnos*.

<sup>16</sup>Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 198.

angry souls of the departed who had been buried without due ritual and honors. In revenge for this disregard, these dead were supposed to inflict terrible calamities upon negligent offspring and upon the community that had permitted such an outrage.<sup>17</sup>

The spirits of the Lemuria were called the Lemures. As in the case of their gods, the Romans never endowed the inhabitants of their spirit-world with any definite shapes. This spirit-world was vaguely understood, darkly defined, but greatly feared. The nearest approach to a definition of the spirits is "umbras vagantes hominum ante diem mortuorum atque ideo metuendas,"<sup>18</sup> or, more commonly, "larvæ nocturnæ et terrificationes imaginum et bestiarum."<sup>19</sup> Here, it would seem, the terms *larvæ* and *lemures* are interchangeable. But Apuleius<sup>20</sup> thinks that "*lemures* is a general word for spirits after they have left the body, while those that haunt houses are specially called *larvæ*." The difference, however, appears more fantastic than real. For, in an age when wars were frequent and violence unrestrained, deaths must have occurred in great number, and in consequence the spirits of the unburied dead were thought to multiply rapidly. These ghosts in their activities and general behavior resembled in a marked degree the fearful *Keres* of the Greeks. The Romans felt that, in order to delimit their growing number and lessen their power for evil, a periodical expulsion of them was indispensable.

The apostropaic form of the ritual has been preserved by Ovid.<sup>21</sup> During the festival of the Lemuria each *pater familias* had to perform the duty of laying to rest the ghosts of the departed. The ceremony was somewhat complex. At midnight the *pater familias* arose, and with bare feet<sup>22</sup> and washed hands,

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<sup>17</sup>Carter, *Ancestor Worship*, Hastings' *Encycl. of Rel. and Eth.*

<sup>18</sup>Porphyrion, on Horace, *Epist.*, ii, 2. 209.

<sup>19</sup>Nonius, 135. Cf. Festus, s. v. *fabæ*.

<sup>20</sup>Apuleius, *De Genio Socratis*, 15.

<sup>21</sup>*Fasti*, v, 429ff.

<sup>22</sup>In performing sacred rites a man must be free, "habent vincula nulla pedes" (Ovid, *Fasti*, v, 432; cf. Plutarch, *Quæst. Rom.* iii).

making strange signs with his fingers and thumbs to keep the spirits away, he walked back and forth in the house. After this preliminary act, he put into his mouth a number of black beans. Then with his face averted, he spat them away, at the same time shouting, "These I send forth. With these beans I redeem myself and mine!" Nine times he spoke and refrained from looking back. The shades of the dead, hearkening to the injunction, picked up the scattered beans and followed the exorciser out of the house, as he touched the sacred bowl containing water and struck the brass of *Temesa*. At the threshold he sped the spirits away, reciting aloud nine times the words, "Manes exite paterni." Then he looked back and the ritual was ended.

### 3. *The Influence of the Eastern Redemptive Cults*

The period immediately before and during the Hellenistic Age witnessed a strong revival of religious faith with its consequent recrudescence of superstitious beliefs. At this time there poured upon Europe a steady stream of Oriental cults. These cults laid vigorous stress upon three factors of world-wide human interest: salvation from sin and disease, regeneration, and immortality.<sup>23</sup> The preachers of this new religion were not cold, calculating men, performing their duties perfunctorily. They spoke with a devotion and a zeal that released an ever-increasing wave of emotionalism. People believed them and followed them.

Before the power of these invading cults, the old religion of Olympus with its fairies, wheedling gods, and an altogether too human theology, could not stand unshaken. Rome felt the impact more markedly. Her history during this epoch is one of successive wars followed by terrible social upheavals which

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<sup>23</sup>The works which give the best description of the religious revolutions which took place in the Hellenistic Age are, *The Environment of Early Christianity* by Samuel Angus, New York, 1915; *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* by T. R. Glover, London, 1909; *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* by S. Dill, London, 1904, Bk. IV, ch. i; *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* by Franz Cumont, Chicago, 1911, translated from the French.

created intolerable conditions of life.<sup>24</sup> In such circumstances, her legalistic religion which was largely a tool of repression and misuse in the hands of politicians, was of little avail to men and women seeking relief from the many evils that surrounded them. So we witness a general turning away to the redemptive gods of the East for help and comfort. We, therefore, are not surprised to see an average Roman like Lucius pray with tearful eyes to the great goddess of the Nile:

"Thou (Isis) tendest the mischance of miserable men with a sweet mother's love. . . . Always by land and sea thou guardest men, thou drivest from them the storms of life and stretchest out to them thy saving hand, wherewith thou unbindest even the inextricable weft of Fate."<sup>25</sup>

But the most novel, the most startling feature of the mystery-cults was their organization and methods. These made a profound appeal and a lasting impression upon the dazzled people of Europe. The chief of these cults was that of the Great Mother of the Gods. She was brought to Rome during the trying period of the Second Punic War and was permanently established in the city, as one of the saving divinities.<sup>26</sup> Her ritual was as imposing as it was mysterious. It would be impossible to improve on Lucretius in giving a description of her pageant. He writes:

"Adorned with this emblem (the mural crown), the image of the divine Mother is carried nowadays through wide lands in awe-inspiring state. Different nations, after old-established ritual, name her the Idæan Mother, and give for escort Phrygian bands. . . . Tight-stretched tambourines and hollow cymbals thunder all round to the stroke of their open hands, and horns menace with hoarse-sounding music, and the hollow pipe stirs their minds with its Phrygian strain. They carry weapons before them, emblems of furious rage, meet to fill the thankless souls and godless breasts of the rabble with terror for the divinity

<sup>24</sup>Greenidge, A. H. J. *A History of Rome* (New York, 1905), ch. i; Davis, S., *The Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome* (New York, 1910), ch. v.

<sup>25</sup>Apuleius, *Metam.*, xi. 25, Butler's Translation.

<sup>26</sup>Ovid, *Fasti*, iv, 179ff.

of the goddess. So, when she first rides in procession through the great cities and mutely enriches mortals with a blessing not expressed in words, they strew all her path with brass and silver, presenting her with bounteous alms, and scatter over her a snow-shower of roses, overshadowing the mother and her troops of attendants. Here an armed band, to which the Greeks give the name of Phrygian Curates, join in the game of arms and leap in measure, all dripping with blood and the awful crests upon their heads quiver and shake."<sup>27</sup>

The shouting and leaping, the cutting with knives, and the general violence and burning enthusiasm with which this strange religion was attended stirred even the dull, unresponsive Roman to an active participation in her worship. What could the old frigid gods of the Capitoline do before the sweeping fire of the all-conquering Mother of the Gods? No wonder that the ancient festivals, once so popular, now died out; the priests' voice, once so powerful, was heard no more; and Varro expressed his fear "that gods were perishing, not from the blows of foreign enemies, but from very neglect on the part of the citizens."<sup>28</sup>

But more important than anything else was the fact that all mystery-cults were soteriological in character. They offered, through their mystic ritual, personal salvation from sin, from disease, and from the influence of demons, and gave the devotee the reward of immortality. In the Græco-Roman world there were many materialists who denied, and a group of skeptics who doubted, salvation and immortality.<sup>29</sup> but the rank and file of the people put their implicit trust in the gods and hoped for deliverance.

<sup>27</sup>Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ii, 608ff. Translation by Glover.

<sup>28</sup>Varro, *Antiquities*, ed. Aghad, 141; cf. St. Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, vi, 2.

<sup>29</sup>The Græco-Roman intellectuals evinced little or no interest in salvation and immortality. The Socrates of Xenophon is not interested in the matter (Xenophon, *Memor.*, *passim*); the arguments put in his mouth in the *Phædo* are those of Plato. In the *Apology* the great philosopher deems death a dreamless sleep or a journey to where are the true judges and the renowned dead (*Apology*, ed. Dyer, 40c). Cæsar had no faith in the hereafter (Sallust, *Cat.*, 51-52; cf. Cicero, in *Cat.*, iv, 4. 7), and Pliny ridiculed it (*Hist. Nat.*, vii, 55, 188).

This fact can be illustrated by a most significant event in Roman history: the introduction into Rome of the *lectisternia*. It was early in 399 B. C. The previous winter, Livy<sup>30</sup> tells us, was one of terrible severity, marked by sweeping cold waves and heavy snowfalls. The Tiber was choked with blocks of ice, rendering navigation impossible. The roads, too, broken by torrential rains and snowdrifts, became utterly impassable. The city was completely isolated from the outside world. To add to the calamity, an equally extreme hot season followed the fierce winter. This sudden change of temperature gave rise to a malignant plague which killed both man and beast. The senate decreed that the Sibylline Books should be consulted to find the cause and the remedy of the pestilence. ' Nothing could be discovered. The priests were ordered to perform the old ceremony, but this failed to secure the *pax deorum*. A new rite was tried and this also without avail.<sup>31</sup> "The times were out of joint—the peace of the gods was broken, and thus the community was no longer in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe. The result was the revival of *religio*, of the feeling of alarm and anxiety out of which the whole religious system had grown. The old deities might seem to be forsaking their function, since the old rites ceased to appeal to them."<sup>32</sup> In such perplexity what could be done? Where could the remedy be found? Priests, augurs, and *haruspices* all worked feverishly to find a solution of the problem. They failed. It was decided then to invoke the aid of foreign deities and establish in Rome a new cult—the *Lectisternium*.<sup>33</sup> Under this name the people

<sup>30</sup>Livy, *Hist.*, v, 13, 4ff.

<sup>31</sup>Livy, *Hist.*, vii, 2.

<sup>32</sup>Fowler, *Rel. Experience*, pp. 261-262.

<sup>33</sup>The origin of the *Lectisternium* has been the cause of much controversy. However, the weight of opinion seems inclined to ascribe it to an Oriental source. Preller (*Römische Mythologie*, 3d ed., vol. I, p. 149ff.) maintains that it belonged to the national religion of Rome, handed down from earliest antiquity. As proof of this he cites Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xxxii, 10, as believing that *cenæ pulvinariæ* had been ordained by Numa. He also quotes Servius, *ad Aen.*, x, 76, in which reference is made to a *lectus* spread before Picus and Pilumnus to insure successful childbirth. But Marquardt

worshiped six gods, Apollo and Latona, Diana and Hercules, Mercurius and Neptunus. They were carried on portable couches through the streets of the city and exposed to public view in temples and public buildings.<sup>34</sup> Their presence was immediately felt and the plague began to abate.

The city's authorities decreed splendid solemnities to the divine healers, in which all took part, patrician and plebeian, women and children, bond and free. The doors of every house in Rome were flung wide open, and any one who wished to was allowed to come in and share the cheer of the family. The festival lasted eight days and it was a period of general good-will. "Friendly conversations went on between persons who formerly had been at variance; and their treatment of one another was exceedingly considerate and kind. All old disputes and quarrels were buried, and new ones were not allowed to come up. Even the prisoners loaded with chains were freed during those days, for it was felt to be an impiety to hold in confinement those whom the gods had healed."<sup>35</sup>

To the *lectisternium* were added a little later the *ludi scenici*. These games, no doubt, acted as a diversion. They kept the minds of the people away from the prevailing misery. More than this: they softened the tenseness caused by fear and uncertainty by allowing the emotions to play freely in the excitement of the festival. "We have here in fact," says Warde-Fowler,<sup>36</sup> "the first appearance, certainly recurring in later Roman history, of a tendency not only to seek for novelty, but for a more emotional expression of religious feeling than was offered by the old forms of sacrifice and prayer, conducted as they were by the priest on behalf of the community, without its active participation."

(*Römische Staatsverwaltung*, iii, 45ff., 186f.), on the other hand, gives these arguments in support of its Oriental origin: (1) The rite was found in the Sibylline Books based on Hellenic sources; (2) the six deities were all Greek; (3) the rite was very early known in Greece.

<sup>34</sup>Livy, *Hist.*, vii, 3.

<sup>35</sup>Livy, *Hist.*, v, 13.

<sup>36</sup>*Religious Exper.*, p. 263.

In Roman religion this element of emotion was almost wholly new; but in the ethnic cults it was the predominant feature. In the fermentation of emotional outbursts, the boundaries of national religions were annihilated, and the gods of one country crossed over to another, intermingling and intermarrying, and frequently even changing their names. The world was slowly evolving a universal religion. This coalescing process is known as syncretism. Thus Asklepios migrated to Rome in the form of a serpent and became Æsculapius,<sup>37</sup> Zeus was identified with Jupiter and Ammon, Ares with Mars, Hera with Iuno and the Magna Mater, Aphrodite with Venus and the Syrian Astarte.<sup>38</sup>

The forces that produced this syncretistic movement in the Græco-Roman world originated in one common desire—salvation.<sup>39</sup> Men yearned for social rest and stability. The world was weary of wars and revolutions in the wake of which had followed famine and destructive diseases. They demanded peace and security from the recurring evils of life. Indeed, there was felt a general desire “for certainty and authority in philosophy and in religion, and this was parallel to a universal demand for salvation—salvation from the confusion and isolation of the individual; from the almost universal sense of decay and degeneration; from the oppression of fatalism and astral worship; from the evil of dualism, the inherent evil of matter and the body; from the hindrances that prevent the soul from returning to its dear fatherland, the sense of estrangement from the deity; from the darkness of death, and emphatically from the power of demons.”<sup>40</sup> Everywhere there was suffering. Everywhere there was discontent. Calamities encompassed human life; diseases physical and spiritual knocked at the door of the poor and the rich. One power only, it was felt, could save them from their misery—the power of the gods. With the ardor and self-reliance

<sup>37</sup>Ovid, *Metam.*, xv, 620ff.

<sup>38</sup>Réville, J., *La religion à Rome sous les Sévères* (Paris, 1885), especially chs. iii, iv, and v, where he traces the evolution of the syncretistic movement.

<sup>39</sup>Angus, *op. cit.*, p. 83ff.

<sup>40</sup>Angus, *op. cit.*, p. 134; cf. Réville, *op. cit.*, ch. v.



born of a new faith, the world turned to the deities in general; but the ones which were especially appealed to were the divinities of healing, Athena, Apollo, Serapis, Asklepios, and Zeus himself.

#### 4. *The Gods as Healers*

(1) *Athena*.—This deity, regarded at first as a mere political guardian, acquired during the Hellenistic period the functions of a medical goddess. Thus the Athena Paionia in the inner and outer *kerameikos* was worshiped as the deity of protection and health.<sup>41</sup> The Athena Hygeia once appeared to Pericles, it is said, and revealed to him in a dream how to make a remedy by crushing a kind of grass which crept upon old walls.<sup>42</sup> This remedy was to be used to heal a man who, while doing some repair work in the *propylæa*, had been severely injured by a fall.<sup>43</sup> In the days of danger, whether the city of Athens was beset by enemies or ravaged by pestilence, the goddess was ever on her guard to deliver her people from distress and disease. Once, for instance, while a deadly plague was taking a fearful toll of lives, the Divine Maiden flew to her city and saved it from destruction and death.<sup>44</sup>

(2) *Apollo*.—Of all the healing deities Apollo, perhaps, is the most picturesque and romantic. The earliest sources refer to him as the avenger of evil-doing and the sender of plagues.<sup>45</sup> But gradually these functions became subordinated to his greater office, that of healing. Thus he ceased to be the Apollo the Deadly<sup>46</sup> and became the saviour of mankind. It was in this capacity that he answered the prayers of the inhabitants of a certain town, who were visited by a swarm of locusts and saved them from the pests.<sup>47</sup> And again, it was as Apollo Smintheus

<sup>41</sup>Pausanias, i, 2. 4.

<sup>42</sup>Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xxii, 43-44.

<sup>43</sup>Plutarch, *Pericles*, 13. Pliny says (*Hist. Nat.*, xxii, 43) that the man was helping to build a temple.

<sup>44</sup>*C. I. A.*, i, 475.

<sup>45</sup>*Iliad*, i, 43ff.

<sup>46</sup>*I. G.* i, 8343; cf. *I. G.* 2566.

<sup>47</sup>Pausanias, i, 24. 8.

that he relieved the dwellers of the Troad from a terrible plague of mice.<sup>48</sup> For such services his devotees everywhere fondly gave him the epithet of averter of evil, as the Aristophanic *Apotropaios* implies.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, Apollo was thought to have wrought so many deliverances from pestilences and famines, from disease and all manner of sufferings, that there arose in his honor an extensive and complex cult under the significant name of Apollo the Healer.<sup>50</sup> He was also commonly called the Physician,<sup>51</sup> and believed to be the founder of the medical art.<sup>52</sup> After his migration to Rome with the first *lectisternium*, he won in the hearts of the Romans an enviable place. A grateful people built him a splendid temple "pro valitudine populi Romani."<sup>53</sup> His usual name in Italy was Apollo Medicus, but in the prayers of the Vestal Virgins, he was generally invoked as Apollo Pæan.<sup>54</sup>

(3) *Isis*.—Isis was a native of the Nile valley. During the Hellenistic period her cult spread rapidly throughout the East, became well known in the West, and at one time stood as the greatest rival of Christianity. Being a chthonian deity, in Greece she was easily identified with Demeter and had shrines in numerous places.<sup>55</sup> In the West, at first she met considerable opposition, but finally she conquered all obstacles. Isis came to Rome in the time of Sulla.<sup>56</sup> The great general had her statue placed on the capitol, whence it was removed some years later by a decree of the senate.<sup>57</sup> But through her miracles of healing the

<sup>48</sup>Pausanias, x, 12. 5.

<sup>49</sup>Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 161.

<sup>50</sup>Farnell, L. R., *Cults of the Greek States*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1896). IV, p. 325 and 409.

<sup>51</sup>Aristophanes, *Birds*, 584.

<sup>52</sup>Diodorus Sic., v, 74; cf. Philostratus, *Vita Apol. Tyan.*, iii, 44.

<sup>53</sup>Livy, iv, 25. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Macrobius, *Saturn.*, i, 17. 15.

<sup>55</sup>For instance, in Acrocorinthus (Paus., ii, 4. 7), at Megara (Paus., i, 41. 4), at Phlius (Paus., ii, 13. 7), at Troazene (Paus., ii, 32. 6), and in many other places.

<sup>56</sup>Apuleius, *Metam.*, xi, 30.

<sup>57</sup>Tertul., *ad Nat.*, i, 10; *Apol.*, 6.

goddess had so endeared herself in the heart of the populace, and even of a great many of the authorities, that the decree was resisted. In 53 B. C. the senate issued another decree against Isis, this time aiming at the elimination of private chapels. But this, too, proved fruitless. Finally the senate passed a resolution allowing the goddess to have shrines outside the *pomoerium*.<sup>58</sup> Later on the senate, recognizing the futility of any further opposition, granted the people full freedom to worship her and built her a splendid temple in addition.<sup>59</sup>

As a healing deity Isis had many attributes. The most common were these: *soteira*, *epekoos*, *sospitatrix*, *restitutrix salutis*. The sick, the lame, the blind, came to her temple and remained there until the goddess visited them and healed them.<sup>60</sup> We are in possession of a large number of inscriptions recording votive offerings of patients who had been successfully cured by the divine physician.<sup>61</sup> These testimonials of gratitude include images of the divine healer carved with exquisite art on rings, trinkets, spoons, amulets, precious stones, marbles, bricks, and particularly on the *abraxas*. Generally, in these relics, beneath the image, we find an inscription recording a propitiatory formula, an incantation, a prayer, or a sacred text, used to invoke the grace of the divine healer.<sup>62</sup>

(4) *Asklepios*.—From very humble beginnings Asklepios arose to be the greatest healing god of Hellas and of the world. At first he was a mere earth-spirit with a shadowy personality; but during the classical period his worship received a tremendous impetus both in Greece and in the West.

A study of his ritual reveals a multitude of contradictions. Even his later cult, in its more developed form, shows a confusion of details out of which it is most difficult to unravel the original elements. This merely demonstrates that Asklepios, like many

<sup>58</sup>Dio Cas., xlvii, 15.

<sup>59</sup>Dio Cas., *ibid*.

<sup>60</sup>Diod. Sic., i, 25; Plutarch, *de Is. et Os. passim*.

<sup>61</sup>C. I. G. 2304; C. I. G. ii, 3386.

<sup>62</sup>Plutarch, *l. c.*

another Hellenic divinity, was a compound of many other gods. "Thus in one locality he is worshiped with *trapeza* and *kline*, and in another he is the god of light—Aiglaer and Aglaopes. Here he is the personification of healing, in a water-cure establishment; there he is the patron god of the city."<sup>63</sup> Homer knew Asklepios as a "blameless physician,"<sup>64</sup> the devoted disciple of Cheiron, and the father of the warrior-surgeon Machaon,<sup>65</sup> with whom later interpolations associated a brother named Podaleiros.<sup>66</sup>

The sanctuaries of Asklepios were located generally in positions unusually conducive to health and sanitation, and quite early they acquired a world-importance and fame. Epidaurus and Kos became the influential shrines of healing and the name of the presiding deity was known throughout the confines of the Roman empire and beyond.

There appear to have been two characteristics in the cult of Asklepios which are always present: the serpent and the well, or spring. The snake is the attribute of nearly all the chthonian deities, but is especially prominent in the worship of Asklepios. The adoption of this animal as a symbol of healing was probably because of its strange and weird peculiarities. To follow the explanation of Walton:<sup>67</sup> "Of all earth's creatures, the serpent in many ways is the least like a human being, and most inexplicable and mysterious. The dwelling is the earth; the quick motion; the sudden disappearance; the staring, lidless eyes; the power of enduring hunger; its longevity; the casting of its skin; and, above all, its method of killing, and the peculiar attraction of its eyes;—all these found expression in superstitions."<sup>68</sup> This

<sup>63</sup>Walton, A., *The Cult of Asklepios*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, No. iii, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup>*Iliad*, iv, 194.

<sup>65</sup>*Iliad*, iv, 200-202.

<sup>66</sup>*Iliad*, ii, 732; xi, 833.

<sup>67</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 11ff.

<sup>68</sup>The snake has always been thought to possess healing qualities. Thus in Egypt it was regarded as a power against disease. It is told that one Sheikh Haredi kept the animal in a prepared cave. At any desired moment, a virgin was sent to fetch it out twined about her neck, to be carried to the bedside of the sick, where it accomplished marvelous cures (Norden, F. L.,

strangeness inspired both veneration and fear among the people of antiquity, as indeed it does to-day, for the sacred reptile.

Gradually the personality of Asklepios, together with his healing virtues, were transmitted to his attribute, the snake, which thereby became both the representative of the god, and itself a healing divinity. Thus, when in 293 B. C., following a deadly plague, the Romans determined to adopt the Asklepios worship, they dispatched an embassy to Greece for the purpose of asking the god how to subdue the pestilence. The envoys returned, bringing with them a snake caught in the temple precinct of Epidaurus, which was popularly believed to be the god himself. As the barge carrying the embassy approached the city, the snake, of its own accord, leaped from the boat into the water and swam clear across the Tiber, landing on the "Sacred Isle." Here a devoted people reared a magnificent temple to Asklepios,<sup>69</sup> which eventually became a great hospital whither thousands of patients annually turned in their search for health.<sup>70</sup>

Aelian describes the serpents employed in the Asklepeia as of a reddish-brown, fiery color, sharp-sighted, with a broad mouth, whose bite was not fatal.<sup>71</sup> The people had a deep veneration for them, because of their healing power.<sup>72</sup> This folk belief is evidenced by the story that in Epidaurus a man suffering from an ulcer on his toe, was conveyed to a seat in the temple area. Here he fell sound asleep. While yet in this state, a serpent came, licked the sore with its tongue and then glided back into the sacred court. When the man awoke he was completely cured.<sup>73</sup> And again, it was told that a childless woman, upon visiting the shrine to beseech the god to remove her barrenness,

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*Travels in the East*, 2 vols., London, 1757, II, p. 40; cf. Wilkinson, J. G., *Handbook of Egypt*, London, 1867, p. 301). The brass serpent of the Old Testament (Num. xxi, 9) points to the same belief.

<sup>69</sup>Livy, *Epitome*, xi.

<sup>70</sup>Besnier, M., *L' Ile Tiberine dans l' antiquité* (Paris, 1902), p. 190ff.

<sup>71</sup>Aelian, *H. A.*, viii, 12.

<sup>72</sup>Aristophanes, *Pluto*, 732-36.

<sup>73</sup>Baunack, J., *Inchriften aus dem Asklepeion zu Epidauros* (Leipzig, 1886), i, 80, 117.

saw a snake slowly crawling to her. The creature touched the woman with its tail, and immediately, upon knowing her husband, she conceived.<sup>74</sup>

From time immemorial the purifying and healing qualities of various waters have been recognized. The lands of classical antiquity were full of springs and streams possessing both magical properties and curative virtues. Thus in the stream within the cave at Samicum in Elis the lepers, after sacrificing to the presiding nymph, washed away their uncleanness.<sup>75</sup> The Alyssus in Arcadia cured those who had been bitten by mad dogs.<sup>76</sup> The waters of Pamisus in Messenia healed the diseases of little children.<sup>77</sup> The spring of the Ionides at Heraclea in Elis was a panacea.<sup>78</sup> For this reason the temples of Asklepios were generally located near or at a sacred spring.<sup>79</sup> Aelian has given us a description of one of these sanctuaries at the healing wells. He writes:<sup>80</sup>

"The part of the temple (at Pergamum) which is open to the air and accessible, is a very lovely spot, in the very middle of which is the sacred spring. The water flows from a plane-tree, or, if you prefer, from the very fountain of the temple itself, which is a more beautiful thought. So every one believes that the water flows from a wholesome and beneficial place, as it proceeds from the very altar and temple of the Saviour God."

The curative qualities attributed to these divine fountains soon became known through the length and breadth of the Græco-Roman world. The knowledge was effectively spread by the priests through the departing patients, who in some way had been benefited by washing their bodies in the cleansing waters. Indeed, "the fame and popularity of the Asklepios cult were due to its practical side. The same faith which even to this day impels

<sup>74</sup>Baunack, *l. c.*

<sup>75</sup>Pausanias, v, 5. 11.

<sup>76</sup>Pausanias, viii, 19. 3.

<sup>77</sup>Pausanias, iv, 31. 4.

<sup>78</sup>Pausanias, vi, 22. 7.

<sup>79</sup>E. g., Pausanias, iii, 21. 2 and 21. 8.

<sup>80</sup>Aristeides, *Sac. Or.*, p. 410 (Keil).

hundreds to seek health at obscure wells said to have miraculous power, was more potent at the time when medical science was in its infancy and diseases were believed to be the work of malignant demons. And this side of the cult continued long after the god Asklepios ceased to be. It is an accepted fact that many rites of the Christian church have been adapted from the religious ceremonies of the people who, in adopting the new system, changed their faith in name only. There prevails in Greece to this day the practice of sleeping at the shrine of the image of certain saints. A careful study of the folk in Catholic countries would reveal a mass of customs directly derived from the ritual of the Greek healing gods. Beside the picture of the Mother of God, there hang models of legs, arms, or other parts of the body, just as in the temples of old."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

## CHAPTER II

### INCUBATION<sup>82</sup>

#### 1. *Its Prevalence*

INCUBATION may be described as the practice of passing the night, either asleep or awake, in a sanctuary for the purpose of being cured of disease by a god. The custom was widely prevalent if not universal. The reason for the practice lay in the belief that while the patient was asleep, the soul would be released of the ordinary trammels of the body, and become particularly susceptible to divine influence, and the deity could under such conditions easily enter into communion with the devotee. The theory is set forth with great clearness by a classic sentence from Job:

"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction."<sup>83</sup>

In Greece, long before the days of Artemidorus and Ælian Aristeides, whose works are our chief source of information on the subject under discussion, the science of oneiromancy was indeed well known. The gods into whose shrines the suppliants took refuge in times of stress and sickness, were generally chthonian divinities, heroes who had gone down into the earth and had been invested with her power. This power the earth manifested in two ways: by sending dreams<sup>84</sup> and by producing a great variety of herbs that give life or death. The knowledge of such herbs Earth transmitted to the terrestrial gods that had entered into her. On this account the sanctuaries of these earth-spirits

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<sup>82</sup>See Deubner, L., *De Incubatione* (Gissae, 1899), and Hamilton, M., *Incubation* (London, 1906). These are the best monographs on the subject.

<sup>83</sup>Job xxxiii, 15-17.

<sup>84</sup>Euripides, *Hecuba*, 70ff.



became large centers where men flocked to receive health through incubation.<sup>85</sup>

With the breaking up of the city-states and the irruption of Eastern emotionalism into Europe, the practice of incubation became very popular. Thus, in the Roman period, healing shrines were multiplied rapidly, and some of them achieved international reputation.<sup>86</sup> Even some of the non-healing divinities were endowed with medical power of this kind by the growing superstition. Hercules had his name changed into Somnalis, whose shrine was crowded with patients seeking relief from their suffering.<sup>87</sup> Dionysus, too, by dreams communicated remedies to his numerous suppliants, the Amphicleans, who had been smitten with a dread disease.<sup>88</sup> Even in far away Acharaca, in Asia Minor, there was a famous oracle of healing called the Charonian Cave. It is said that the officials of this holy sanatorium were in the habit of sleeping at the entrance, in the hope of receiving from the indwelling deity instruction by dreams, which they communicated in the form of prescriptions, to the thousands of patients that flocked thither to be cured. Of similar character was the sanctuary of Picus and Faunus in Italy.<sup>89</sup>

## 2. *Famous Asklepeia*

In the Græco-Roman period Asklepios surpassed all the other healing gods in influence and renown. His sanctuaries bore customarily the name of *Asklepeion*. Those at Epidaurus and Kos were undoubtedly the most frequented, and therefore the most illustrious.

The sanctuary at Epidaurus was located at a distance of about two miles from the town proper. It lay on the southeast, at the foot of Mount Titthion. The extravagant liberality of the

<sup>85</sup>*E. G.*, Calchas (Strabo, vi, 3. 9, 284); the cures of Amphiaraus (Herod., viii, 134).

<sup>86</sup>Hamilton, *op. cit.*, Part I; cf. Bouché—Leclercq, *op. cit.*, iii (entire).

<sup>87</sup>Bouché—Leclercq, *op. cit.*, iii, p. 310.

<sup>88</sup>Pausanias, x, 33. 5.

<sup>89</sup>Strabo, xiv, 44. 649; Virgil, *Æneid*, vii, 85ff.

suppliants who had been healed, had enabled the attendant priests to transform the entire valley into a beautiful and luxurious garden, adorned with many splendid architectural decorations.<sup>90</sup> In this respect the sanctuary at Epidauros presented a marked contrast to many modern hospitals, the first sight of which inspires fear and creates depression. Here were built charming chapels, stalls, and votive *stelae*, recording minutely the disease with which the patient had been afflicted and the manner of its cure. Here also stood the theater of Polyclitus and the great *tholos*, the circular structure enclosing the shrine in which Asklepios dwelt. The theater was built on such a magnificent scale and with such finished artistry that Pausanias deemed it the best worth seeing, either in Hellas or at Rome.<sup>91</sup> In addition to this, as a means of rebuilding the strength of the convalescent patients, as well as to amuse them, a large stadium was erected nearby, in which, besides the games, were celebrated the festivals of the god-physician. Within the inner temple, standing upon a delicately wrought pedestal, could be seen the marvelous chryselephantine statue of Asklepios, the handiwork of Thrasymedes of Paros. The effigy was half the size of the statue of Olympian Zeus at Athens. The divine healer was represented seated on a throne, holding a staff in one hand and in the other the head of a serpent. A dog lay at the base of the statue.<sup>92</sup> The chair on which the god sat was adorned with a vivid bas relief descriptive of the Argive heroes—Bellephoron slaying the Chimæra, and Perseus, dangling the severed head of Medusa.<sup>93</sup> All these were calculated to produce a profound impression of majesty and power on the beholder. Contiguous to the main edifice were the dormitories where the patients slept, awaiting the dreams which the god might send, or an actual visitation of the divine healer himself.

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<sup>90</sup>Bouché—Leclercq, *op cit.*, iii, p. 285.

<sup>91</sup>Pausanias, ii, 27. 5.

<sup>92</sup>Pausanias, ii, 27. 2.

<sup>93</sup>Pausanias, *ibid.*

3. *Communicating Directly with Deity*

The anthropomorphic conception of the divinities among the peoples of classical antiquity rendered direct approach to the god very simple and easy. The deities were nothing but magnified and purified men. In the relations between gods and men the chief obstacle was thought to be the body, which the Orphics conceived of as the grave of the soul. If this could be held in subjection, they believed that then the spirit could converse freely with the blessed gods. The spirit was especially free at night, when the material half of man lay seemingly dead asleep. The doctrine is clearly set forth by Æschylus in his declaration that "in slumber the eye of the soul waxes bright, but by daytime man's doom goes unforeseen."<sup>94</sup>

As a result of this view it was but natural for the people to believe that the likeliest place for one to converse with the deity and receive medical aid or any other help was the house of the god himself. The suppliant, however, who came to the shrine in the hope that, while he was asleep, the god would reveal himself to him in a dream, or speak to him directly, was not always successful. He might have no dream, and the visitation might not take place. And even when the dream came, or he heard the voice of the god, these were not always clear to him. And if, by mischance, the suppliant gave the wrong interpretation to the dream, it might indeed prove fatal. Therefore manuals were written by the expert oneirocritics as guides to the patients. The most famous of these is that of Artemidorus, called the *Oneirocritica*. In it we find the following instructions on the right interpretation of temple dreams:

"You will find the prescriptions of the gods either simple and containing no enigma, for the gods prescribe ointments, plasters, food and drink, by the same name as we use; or when the gods do speak in enigmas, their enigmas are quite clear. For example, a woman who had inflammation of the breast thought that she was suckled by a sheep. She was cured by a plaster of the herb sheep's tongue; the composition of the plant's name

<sup>94</sup> Æschylus, *Eumen.*, 104f.; cf. Plato, *Symposium*, 203A.

showed the connection between the herb and the sheep's tongue. . . . Do not decide your dream from one conjecture, so that you do not fall into error and appear foolish. For example, a man who was ill thought he saw a person called Peison. This was interpreted as meaning great safety and security, and also it was said he would live ninety-five years after the first appearance of Peison. Nevertheless, the man who had seen the vision died during the same illness, for Peison had appeared to him carrying sweet oil. Sweet oil is baleful in the case of illness, because of its connection with dead bodies."<sup>95</sup>

Then, too, the god would appear only to certain persons who were afflicted with certain maladies. To save some individuals from their disease would have been tantamount to counteracting the will of the fates who had inflicted that particular affection. Thus Asklepios would never restore the dead to life, nor would he listen to the petition of or heal any one who through misconduct and sin had brought the disease upon himself. The communion with the deity, on this account, had its limitations and restrictions.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4. *The Rite of Incubation*

Since diseases were thought to spring from the influence of the evil spirits and sin, the suppliant, before being admitted into the sacred temple area, had to go through a certain purificatory ritual. This was performed with two aims in view: to cleanse the patient of his moral and spiritual impurities, and to prevent him from contaminating the sanctuary. For among the Greeks,<sup>97</sup> as well as among the Romans and Jews, disease of whatever kind carried with it a defilement. Therefore, it was absolutely imperative that the suppliant should be thoroughly washed, and then required to keep perfectly continent before approaching the healing god.<sup>98</sup>

The purificatory ritual was as follows: First the patient was washed in clean, cold water. This act, at once hygienic and sym-

<sup>95</sup>Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, iv, 22. Translation by M. Hamilton.

<sup>96</sup>Bouché—Leclercq, *op. cit.*, iii, p. 288.

<sup>97</sup>Thucydides, iii, 104 (Jowett).

<sup>98</sup>*Revue Archeologique*, xxxix., p. 182.

bolic, was usually preceded by a prayer.<sup>99</sup> Occasionally salt water was used for the cleansing ceremony, as in the case of the women of Tanagra who were initiated into the rite of Dionysus<sup>100</sup> and of Plutus.<sup>101</sup> This was followed by a sacrifice to the deity, the offering consisting of small domestic animals, such as swine,<sup>102</sup> rams,<sup>103</sup> goats,<sup>104</sup> and cocks.<sup>105</sup> Goats, however, were not acceptable in some temples. In Epidaurus for instance, their sacrifice was expressly forbidden, though in Cyrene, whose cult was derived from Epidaurus, no such restriction was observed. After the sacrifice had been duly performed, the patient was permitted to enter the temple precinct. He came bringing with him a mattress to sleep on,<sup>106</sup> and a few wheat cakes with which to make a second sacrifice before lying down to sleep. The cakes were thin, flat, and round, with a hole pierced in the center. They were sweetened, and dipped in oil, wine, or honey.<sup>107</sup>

Once in the temple the mind of the patient was rendered susceptible to the fascinating power of suggestion. The means employed were various. The prepossessions and fear of an individual highly disposed to see visions, were aided by incense burning steadily in front of the altar, by opiates, and by potions. Moreover, the drugs were administered by the attendant priests with all the solemnity of a religious rite, so that the votary, forgetting his pain, might the more easily perceive the faint and far-away voice of another world—the voice of the healing god.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, soul and body were made ready for the touch of the divine hand by severe and protracted fasting.<sup>109</sup> It was taken

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<sup>99</sup>Aelian Aristid., 479. 2.

<sup>100</sup>Pausanias, ix, 20. 4.

<sup>101</sup>Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 656-7.

<sup>102</sup>Pausanias, ii, 11. 7.

<sup>103</sup>Pausanias, *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup>Pausanias, ii, 26. 7.

<sup>105</sup>Tertullian, *ad Nationes*, ii, 2.

<sup>106</sup>Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 663.

<sup>107</sup>Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>108</sup>Plutarch, *de Defectu Orac.*, 41-46.

<sup>109</sup>Apuleius, *Metam.*, xi, 22; Philostratus, *Apol. Tyan.*, i, 8.

for granted that the heavenly vision could come only to the clear spirit, purged as far as possible from the vileness of the flesh.<sup>110</sup>

### 5. *Medical Procedure*

The medical procedure in the sanctuaries of healing varied with the efficiency and craftiness of the attendant priests in handling the patients and diagnosing their illness. In every case, however, it appears that suggestion and hypnosis were employed, unconsciously of course, but with tremendous effectiveness. From whatever source the vision came, it surely had a powerful effect upon the imagination of the patient and sped his recovery. In studying some of the inscriptions recording the affections and the manner of their cure, the prescriptions suggested by the nightly voices to the dreaming brain of the sick suppliants appear to us not only ludicrous but in most cases positively dangerous. Yet one must admit that the lack of scientific medical knowledge was very largely compensated for by an environment which reinforced the weakened faith of the sick man and gave him a new hope by putting him under the immediate care of the deity. Here, within the temple area, one felt encompassed by the very breath of divinity, and a great flow of human sympathy and kindness, which, no doubt counteracted and partially nullified the ill effects of quackery.

"The calm, serene order which the hieratic spirit cultivates at its best, the cheerful routine of the sacred service, blending indistinguishably with the ministry of suffering, and consecrating and ennobling it; the confidence of spirit inspired by the sedate cheerfulness of the priests and the attendants, reinforced by the countless cases of miraculous cures recorded on the walls—all this must have had a powerful and beneficent influence."<sup>111</sup>

To these must be added cleverly devised mechanical means calculated to arouse and stimulate the faith and the hope of the patient. The use of incense and narcotics to dull the senses, the dimly lighted corridors of the dormitories; the soft, whispering

<sup>110</sup>Philostratus, *op. cit.*, ii, 37; vi, 11.

<sup>111</sup>Dill, S., *Roman Society*, p. 463.

music playing within the temple—these must have wrought a mighty change in the spirit and attitude of the sick person. Moreover, there was the august and benign figure of Asklepios which appeared from behind a sliding door in the wall. The figure was so handled that it wheeled slowly and impressively about from patient to patient, blessing and uttering a sweet word of comfort and hope. Under the great excitement, the patient believed this manifestation of the deity to be real and without fraud. The pious trick was repeated endlessly and with undiminished success.<sup>112</sup>

### 6. *The Cures*

The numerous votive tablets found at Epidaurus reveal the solicitude and eagerness of the god to interfere personally and visibly in the affairs of suffering man. In the *Cures*<sup>113</sup> the divine physician appears generally as a "handsome man."<sup>114</sup> During his visitation he pours medicine into the patient's eyes and anoints them.<sup>115</sup> He also employs massaging by rubbing the stomach<sup>116</sup> or the head,<sup>117</sup> and gives medicine and instructions how to use it.<sup>118</sup>

But even more difficult methods were used. The divine physician attempted dangerous surgical operations, such as extracting a lance-head<sup>119</sup> or lancing an ulcer.<sup>120</sup> Now and then he would make a searching inquiry concerning the symptoms<sup>121</sup> and rebuke the patient for not coming to the sanctuary earlier. At times he did not hesitate to ask what the sick person would give

<sup>112</sup>Rouse, W. H. D., *Greek Votive Offerings* (Cambridge, 1902), p. 201ff.

<sup>113</sup>The inscriptions here referred to will be found in the collection of Collitz, H., *Sammlung der griechischen Dialektinschriften*, 4 vols. (Göttingen, 1884), III, *Cures* 3339-3341.

<sup>114</sup>*Cures* 3339.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup>*Cures* 3339.<sup>89</sup>, 77, 121.

<sup>116</sup>*Cures* 3340.<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>117</sup>*Cures* 3340.<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>118</sup>*Cures* 3340.<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>119</sup>*Cures* 4339.<sup>96</sup>, 3340.<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>120</sup>*Cures* 3340.<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>121</sup>*Cures* 3340.<sup>30</sup>.

if he were cured, and laughed unstintedly at a humorous reply.<sup>122</sup> Nothing was too humble for great Asklepios. He compounded a hair-tonic for one whose bald head had been an object of mockery to his friends and relatives<sup>123</sup> and patiently mended a broken pot for a faithful devotee.<sup>124</sup>

A great many of the cures, of course, are clearly made up, or doctored for effect. Others are the legitimate children of deep-rooted superstitions, and still others the products of a fevered imagination. The impossible and the absurd pervade them all; and this fact created widespread skepticism and unbelief among the intelligent class, as well as among the common people.<sup>125</sup> However, the skeptic who came to the sanctuary and openly manifested his incredulity in the miracle-cures, was swiftly whisked away and forcibly convinced!<sup>126</sup> The scornful and those who tried to spy on the work of the healing god, were solemnly warned not to interfere and keep far away. One of these, a certain inquisitive youth named Æschines, once attempted to climb up in a tree and peep into the place where the suppliants were sleeping and undergoing treatment. He was instantly brought down and in his fall he lost both eyes. Now he was compelled himself to become a suppliant. But the god bore no grudge against him, and magnanimously cured him.<sup>127</sup> Terrible also was the fate of those who had been cured and failed to pay their fees.<sup>128</sup> A blind man, for instance, who had received his sight but refused to pay, became blind again until he had done so.<sup>129</sup> Another man who had been cured of disfiguring marks on the face, sent his fee by a friend's hand, but the friend disowned the payment. It happened that later on this man had to come to Asklepios to be cured for a similar affliction. But as he

<sup>122</sup> *Cures* 3339.<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> *Cures* 3339.<sup>124</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> *Cures* 3339.<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>125</sup> *Cures* 3339.<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> *Cures* *ibid*.

<sup>127</sup> *Cures* 3339.<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>128</sup> *Cures* 3340.<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>129</sup> *Cures* 3340.<sup>7</sup>.



lay in the holy place the god-physician went and took down from the wall the other man's bandage (which had been left there in grateful remembrance of the cure) and placed it on the deceiver's face. He was punished, for besides his own he received the original scars of his friend.<sup>130</sup>

In view of such details as these, one is inclined to doubt the authenticity of any of these cures. Yet in cases of nervous diseases,<sup>131</sup> the highly-wrought imagination may have worked a cure as it does to this day at Loreto, Lourdes, or any modern healing shrine.

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<sup>130</sup>*Cures* 3339.<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>131</sup>*Cures* Nos. xiii, xiv.

## CHAPTER III

### PROPHYLACTIC AND CURATIVE MAGIC

#### I. MAGIC IN GREECE

##### 1. *Probable Origin of Magic*

THE origin of magic is lost in the mist of antiquity. Concerning its advent there is much difference of opinion. One believes it came into existence before religion,<sup>132</sup> another opposes this view vigorously,<sup>133</sup> and still another suggests that the two are coeval, since it is almost impossible to separate early religion from magic, the two functioning interchangeably in the life of primitive man.<sup>134</sup>

Very probably magic had its beginning in man's earliest attempt to control those forces of nature which were, or seemed to be, hostile to him. These forces, whether visible or hidden, he personified. He fancied them to be "beings much like himself—fickle, changing, capable of being influenced by inducements or deterred by threats, beneficent or inimical, according as they were satisfied or offended by treatment received."<sup>135</sup> Man naturally felt that the hostile beings or evil spirits that afflicted him with disease, pestilence, famine, and instant death, must not be left at large. They must be brought under control. He must preclude their ill-will from ever interfering with his life and happiness.

But how could man do this? What means were there at his disposal? Many. There was, for instance, the magnet, an object different from all the other objects of nature, because of its

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<sup>132</sup>Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, I, i, pp. 220-244.

<sup>133</sup>Andrew Lang, *Magic and Religion*, pp. 46-75.

<sup>134</sup>Jevons, F. B., *History of Religion*, pp. 24-40.

<sup>135</sup>Thorndike, L., *The Place of Magic in the Intellectual History of Europe* (New York, 1905), p. 29.

power of attraction. He could use this to attract and hold his enemies. For this reason the magnet became early a potent magic charm. Again, there were hot springs, unlike all other springs. Their water he could use to cleanse himself of the defiling diseases with which the demons had afflicted him. And so, in Greece, for example, we have streams and wells of healing.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, there were herbs endowed with wonderful medicinal properties. These he would employ to cure himself of ailments, such as constipation, headache, fever, and epilepsy.<sup>137</sup> In short, he would utilize anything and everything which struck him as peculiar and out of the ordinary. He thought that these objects were not only invested with some strange power which he could use against his enemies, but they were also possessed of remedial qualities.

## 2. *Literary Derivation of Magic*

The ordinary Greek and Latin words for magic are *mageia* (Lat. *magia*), *goeteia*, and *pharmakeia*. The terms *mageia* and *magos* were unknown to Homer, although the references to magic in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are numerous.<sup>138</sup>

These words are not Greek. The *magoi* were a conspicuous religious caste of Persia. Herodotus,<sup>139</sup> however, reckons them among the six tribes of the Medes. The simple religion which these priests preached and practiced was known as *mageia*. During the reign of Darius the Magi became embroiled in a great uprising against the king and were in consequence almost exterminated.<sup>140</sup> But under Xerxes they occupied a position of power and were constantly consulted by the king as soothsayers and healers.<sup>141</sup>

To the Hellenic people the Magi were the representatives

<sup>136</sup>Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 116-144.

<sup>137</sup>Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 39.

<sup>138</sup>Gehering, A., *Index Homericus* (Leipzig, 1891), s. v. *mageia* and *magoi*, i, 101.

<sup>139</sup>Herodotus, iii, 79.

<sup>140</sup>Plutarch, *Alcib.*, 122A.

<sup>141</sup>Herodotus, iii, 79; Herodotus, vii, 114.

*par excellence* of the religion of the Persians. No sacrifices might be offered by the Persians unless one of their order was present, chanting the prescribed prayers as in the ritual of the Zenda-vesta.<sup>142</sup> The Greeks connected the ritual of the Magi with a foreign system of divination, and the religion of a foe whom they had conquered. Their practices, however, soon spread into the larger cities of the peninsula, notwithstanding the fact that they were looked upon by the more conservative and patriotic as the worst form of imposture and fraud. The growth of this conservative opposition is plainly traceable in the meanings attached to the word Magi by Æschylus and Sophocles. The former employed the term to describe a priestly tribe,<sup>143</sup> the latter used it as an epithet of reproach.<sup>144</sup> But owing to their power of expelling demons, the Magi soon won the regard and reverence of the common people.

The term *goetia* seems never to have been distinguished from *mageia*. The two were used interchangeably. But the post-Socratic philosophers tried to differentiate them by stating that *mageia* employed only good spirits in its ritualistic invocations, whereas *goetia* invariably used the bad.<sup>145</sup> But far more important for this discussion is the third word used for magic: *pharmakeia*. The two former terms were used somewhat in a pejorative sense, but the word *pharmakeia* never degenerated to a bad meaning. Originally it denoted the science which dealt with the magic properties of plants in their relation to the prevention and cure of disease.<sup>146</sup> Thus the *pharmakos* was the magician, the forerunner of the modern physician, apothecary, and toxicologist, either amateur or professional. His specialty was the preparation of prophylactic or curative magic charms, or *pharmaka*, the application of which was generally accompanied

<sup>142</sup>Herodotus, i, 132.

<sup>143</sup>Æschylus, *Per.*, 291.

<sup>144</sup>Sophocles, *Oed. Tyr.*, 387.

<sup>145</sup>Plato, *Symp.*, 202E. Cf. Apuleius, *De Gen. Soc.*, vi, 133, with St. Augustine's note (*Civ. Dei*, viii, 16).

<sup>146</sup>Hippocrates, *Aphorisms*, 1244; Plato, *Laws*, 933B.

by incantations and prayers. But as the effect of a charm might be either harmful or beneficial, according to the will of the *pharmakeus*, the word *pharmakon* was used in the double sense, meaning either remedy or poison.<sup>147</sup>

The method of treatment employed by the *pharmakeis* appears to have been threefold: they administered the drugs either internally by swallowing,<sup>148</sup> applied them on the outside as salves or plasters,<sup>149</sup> or tried to cure the disease by divination.<sup>150</sup> Thus we read that Helen, herself a highly respected *pharmakis*, administered her medicaments internally by mixing them with wine, a "drug that would lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow."<sup>151</sup> And the famous *philtr*, or *pocula amatoria*, as the Romans called them, were given as a drink to the phlegmatic and indifferent to inspire the fire of love.<sup>152</sup> But the application of a *pharmakon* outwardly was more common. In this manner the sons of Autolycus bound up the wound of Odysseus and stopped the flow of blood. In addition they employed an incantation, or, as Homer calls it, "a song of healing."<sup>153</sup>

Inseparable from the operations of magicians is the magic wand. While performing the ritual of incantation the *pharmakeus* swung with his right hand the *rhabdos*, or staff. Thus all magicians and divinities that worked healing are generally represented in art with a staff in their right hand. "The use of the wand seems to be an application of the doctrine of sympathy. It facilitates the transfer of the magician's power to the object upon which he wishes to exert it. But in all cases the wand is a help rather than an actual necessity."<sup>154</sup>

<sup>147</sup>Sophocles, *Trach.*, 1140.

<sup>148</sup>Æschylus, *Persæ*, 479ff.

<sup>149</sup>Theocritus, ii, 1ff. The purple wool was not a plaster but was in itself of magic power.

<sup>150</sup>*Odyssey*, xix, 549.

<sup>151</sup>*Odyssey*, iv, 220-232.

<sup>152</sup>Plautus, *Truc.*, I, i, 22.

<sup>153</sup>*Odyssey*, xix, 457.

<sup>154</sup>Hastings' *Encyc. of Rel. and Eth. s. v. Magic.*

## II. MAGIC IN ROME

The Romans shared with the peoples of antiquity the belief that diseases could be either prevented or cured by magical practices. These practices continued even after the introduction of Hellenic medical science. The conservative class and the common people in general regarded with fear and suspicion Greek medicine. This fact is well reflected in Cato's advice to his son ever to shun Greek physicians and cling to old Italian magico-medical remedies.<sup>155</sup> It was believed that dislocations and fractures could be cured by magic prescriptions;<sup>156</sup> that epilepsy could be healed by spitting upon the afflicted;<sup>157</sup> and that sore feet, and many other diseases, could be remedied by incantation.<sup>158</sup>

## I. Pliny's Discussion of Remedial Magic

Books xxviii, xxix, xxx, and xxxi of Pliny's *Natural History* are immense storehouses of information on medical magic. The author declares that magic exerted the greatest influence in every land and in almost every age, and that "no one should wonder that its authority has been dominating, since it alone has enlarged and combined into one the three other arts which make the most powerful appeal to the human mind."<sup>159</sup> For magic had overrun the realm of religion, had made astrology a part of itself, and at an early age had absorbed the principal functions of medicine.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, it made pretense of being a higher and a holier medical art.<sup>161</sup>

Pliny affects a great aversion for magic and defines the magicians as a *genus vanissimum*.<sup>162</sup> They believe, he writes,<sup>163</sup> the most vulgar absurdities and prescribe remedies dictated by folly rather than by knowledge. They teach, for instance, that toothache may be cured by taking the tooth of a live mole and attaching it to the body of the afflicted person,<sup>164</sup> or by using the

<sup>155</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxix, 14.

<sup>156</sup> Cato, *De Agri.*, 160.

<sup>157</sup> Plautus, *Capt.*, 550-555.

<sup>158</sup> Varro, *De Re Rustica*, i, 2. 27.

<sup>159</sup> xxx, 1.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>162</sup> xxviii, 85.

<sup>163</sup> xxx, 16-18.

<sup>164</sup> xxx, 20.

ashes of the head of a dog that has died in a state of madness. The head, however, should be burned without the flesh, and the ashes applied with the oil of cypress on the part affected.<sup>165</sup> They further teach that the ashes of a dog's teeth, mixed with honey, are useful for difficult dentition of children; and that a hollow tooth, if plugged with ashes of burnt mouse dung, or with a lizard's liver, will be restored to perfect condition.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, they believe that ulcer of the tongue and lips can be cured by taking a decoction made of swallows, boiled in honeyed wine;<sup>167</sup> that livid spots and bruises on the face can be removed by the application of pigeon's excrement;<sup>168</sup> that catarrhal troubles can be cured if the patient kisses a mule's nostrils;<sup>169</sup> that quinsy may be healed by taking in warm water, goose-gall, mixed with honey and owl's brains;<sup>170</sup> ulcerated scrofula is successfully medicated by employing weasel's blood, or the animal itself, boiled in wine;<sup>171</sup> that lung diseases can be cured by using mice, those of Africa particularly, the animal being skinned and boiled in salt and oil, and then taken with the food.<sup>172</sup>

"What can possibly have been the origin of a system of cure such as this?" exclaims the author.<sup>173</sup> Such remedies, he thinks, must have been inspired by a feeling of utter contempt and derision for mankind, and *vanitas* and *impudentia* are the abusive words he continually applies to the magicians.<sup>174</sup> With great vehemence he attacks Democritus in whose memoirs is taught the use of magic as the most effectual method of curing all manner of diseases; and he denounces Osthaneas as a teacher of impiety and untruth, because he too believed in magical remedies as the means of controlling diseases. Against the latter Pliny writes with indignation:

"Thee I accuse, thou uprooter of all human laws, thou in-

<sup>165</sup> xxx, 21.

<sup>166</sup> xxx, 22.

<sup>167</sup> xxx, 27.

<sup>168</sup> xxx, 29.

<sup>169</sup> xxx, 31.

<sup>170</sup> xxx, 33.

<sup>171</sup> xxx, 36.

<sup>172</sup> xxx, 43.

<sup>173</sup> xxviii, 6.

<sup>174</sup> xxx, 1; xxvii, 165.

ventor of these monstrosities, devised, no doubt, with a view that mankind might not forget thy name!"<sup>175</sup>

And yet, even the most superficial examination of the remedies offered by the Roman naturalist himself, reveals the fact that the greater part of them are of a magical character. Indeed, they are more magical than some of those which he rejects as being dictated by folly and desire for gain. Thus, he believes that the odor from the burning horn of a stag has the power of dispelling serpents, because enmity exists between stags and snakes; and that the former track the latter to their holes and extract the snakes thence by the power of their breath, despite all resistance. It is on this account that the sovereign remedy for snake-bite consists of "coagulo hinnulei matris in utero occisi." Moreover, since the stag is not subject to fever, the eating of its flesh will prevent that disease, especially if the animal has died of a single wound.<sup>176</sup> He further asserts that one who wears the longest tooth of a fish, will be cured of fever; that one who carries the carcass of a frog, minus the claws, wrapped in a piece of red cloth, will be protected against disease;<sup>177</sup> that a quick remedy for headache consists in gathering a plant growing on the head of a statue and attaching it to the sufferer's neck with a red string; that tertian fever can be cured by plucking a certain herb before sunrise on the banks of a stream and fastening it to the patient's left arm without his knowledge; and that plants which have taken root in a sieve that has been thrown into a hedge-row "decerptae adalligataeque gravidis partus adcelerant."<sup>178</sup>

## 2. *Prophylactic Amulets*<sup>179</sup>

The most universal means for preventing diseases was the

<sup>175</sup>xxviii, 6.

<sup>176</sup>xiii, 118-119.

<sup>177</sup>xxxii, 113-114.

<sup>178</sup>xxiv, 170-171.

<sup>179</sup>For a full discussion of this subject see Tavenner, *Studies in Magic*, pp. 76-123.



amulet. Space prevents us from discussing in detail this most interesting subject. Various were the forms of the amulet, but the most common one was the *bullā*. This consisted usually of a locket made of cloth or metal, within which was kept the real amulet. The amulet itself might consist of a lizard,<sup>180</sup> a figure representing the *membrum virile*,<sup>181</sup> or a representation of the heart.<sup>182</sup> The amulet was generally worn around the neck,<sup>183</sup> suspended by a string, less frequently around the arms,<sup>184</sup> or the affected part of the body. The amulet was believed to be efficacious in preventing many disorders, of which the following are typical:

(1) DISEASE OF THE THROAT.—Affections such as goitre might be prevented by using the head of a viper wrapped up in a small linen cloth and hung around the neck,<sup>185</sup> or by writing upon a fresh leaf of Egyptian papyrus the name *Ialdabara* and fastening it to the diseased part.<sup>186</sup>

(2) DISEASE OF THE EYE.—Diseases of the eye were thought to be avoided by employing an amulet made of cherry seeds tied on a string, or by taking a stone found in the stomach of a swallow, inclosing it in the shell of a gold-colored lupin and suspending it on the neck;<sup>187</sup> or by wrapping a green lizard, caught in the full moon during the month of September, in a gold-colored lupin and hanging it around the neck.<sup>188</sup>

(3) HEADACHE.—This was prevented by carrying about a peculiar stone taken from a snail's head.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Marc. Empir., viii, 50.

<sup>181</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 39.

<sup>182</sup>Macrobius, *Saturn.*, I, 6. 17.

<sup>183</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xi, 97.

<sup>184</sup>Pliny, xxvii, 89; xxviii, 41.

<sup>185</sup>Marcel. Empir., xv, 67.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>187</sup>*Ibid.*, 50. 45.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid.*, i, 41.

(4) DISEASES OF THE BOWELS.—Intestinal disorders were avoided by using the ankle bone of a hare.<sup>190</sup>

(5) FEVERS.—As this disorder was quite common among the Romans, the amulets employed to prevent them were numerous. Thus continuous fevers were avoided by using dog's teeth suspended about the person,<sup>191</sup> recurrent fevers were averted by carrying tied on the left arm an amulet made of russet cloth containing *cimices*.<sup>192</sup> Quartan fevers were prevented by using the heart of the crocodile wrapped up in black woolen cloth, or the heart of a hyena similarly bound.<sup>193</sup>

(6) FEMALE DISEASES.—Female disorders such as menstrual irregularities, conception, miscarriage, and difficult childbirth were generally averted by amulets of various kinds.<sup>194</sup>

### 3. *Curative Magic Remedies*<sup>195</sup>

The number, variety, and ingredients of magico-medical remedies mentioned by Pliny in his *Natural History* are astonishing. There are as many remedies as names of diseases, and the most one can do is to select a few representative ones.

(1) EPILEPSY.—This was thought to be cured by the revolting method of drinking the blood of a wounded gladiator. To quaff the warm blood of a fighter fallen in the arena, though generally regarded as an act of impiety, was, nevertheless, considered a very sure means of restoring the epileptic to health.<sup>196</sup>

Another way of curing it was as follows: The patient was recommended to drink the rennet of the sea-calf, mixed with

<sup>190</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 199. Cf. xxviii, 48.

<sup>191</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 107.

<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*, xxix, 64.

<sup>193</sup>*Ibid.*, xxviii, 111, 114.

<sup>194</sup>See Marc. Empir., x, 35; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxix, 85; xxviii, 98, 114.

<sup>195</sup>For a large number of curative amulets see Tavenner, *Three as a Magic Number in Latin Literature*, in *T. A. P. A.*, vol. xlvii, 1916.

<sup>196</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 4.

mare's milk, or else with pomegranate juice. Should this prove unsuccessful then the patient was required to take *castoreum*,<sup>197</sup> mixed in three cyathi of oxymel, after fasting. But where the attacks were frequent the patient had to increase the dose. In such case the proper proportions were two drachmae of *castoreum*, one sextarius of oil and honey, and the same quantity of water.<sup>198</sup>

(2) FEVERS.—The remedies for fevers were as numerous as the disease was universal. They are nearly all of magico-medical character. Deer's flesh was believed to be most potent as a febrifuge, because the animal itself was supposed to be free from fever.<sup>199</sup> Periodical and recurrent fevers were thought to be successfully cured by wearing the right eye of a wolf, salted, and suspended as an amulet.<sup>200</sup> Quotidian fevers were controlled if the patient took three drops of blood from an ass's ear, swallowed it in two semisestarii of water.<sup>201</sup> For quartan fevers the magicians recommended the use of cat's dung, tied in an amulet with the toe of a horned owl. This should be worn by the patient until the seventh paroxysm had passed.<sup>202</sup> Still another remedy for the same disorder was to rub the patient with the ashes of burnt cow dung, diluted in a boy's urine, while the sick person held in his right hand the bleeding heart of a hare.<sup>203</sup>

(3) BROKEN BONES.—The most highly esteemed remedy for broken bones consisted of the ashes of the jaw-bone of a wild boar or swine, boiled with bacon and tied about the fractured part.<sup>204</sup> For contusions of the ribs, goat's dung, mixed in wine and applied locally, would produce an immediate cure. This con-

<sup>197</sup>A compound of beaver's testes chopped together (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxii, 28ff.).

<sup>198</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxii, 112.

<sup>199</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, viii, 119.

<sup>200</sup>*Ibid.*, xxviii, 228.

<sup>201</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 229.

<sup>204</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 65.

coction was believed to have aperient, extractive, and healing properties.<sup>205</sup>

(4) JAUNDICE.—For the cure of jaundice, the ashes of a stag's antlers were employed, or the blood of an ass's foal, taken in wine.<sup>206</sup> More common, however, was the use of the foal's feces mixed with beans and wine.<sup>207</sup>

(5) DISEASES OF THE EARS.—The most widely known specific for auricular affections was the mixture of one *cyathus* of the best *garum*,<sup>208</sup> with one *cyathus* and a half of honey, plus one *cyathus* of vinegar. These ingredients had first to be boiled slowly and gently in a new or unused pot over a slow fire. While the decoction was simmering it had to be skimmed with a feather every now and then, so as to prevent the accumulation of scum on the top. And when it had become wholly free of the scum, then it was to be poured lukewarm into the ear.<sup>209</sup> This, it was believed, if properly done, would bring relief immediately. In case, however, the ears were swollen, the swelling had first to be reduced by means of coriander juice. After this the *garum* was applied. Should the pain continue, frogs' fat was carefully injected into the ear.<sup>210</sup>

For ears injured by wounds the following remedy was employed: A certain amount of juice of river-crabs was mixed with barley-meal and kneaded into a paste. This was then applied to the sore parts, which resulted in expelling the pain.<sup>211</sup> And for any one suffering an abscess of the parotid glands, Pliny recommended shells of murex reduced to ashes by pounding and mixed with honey or honeyed wine. This medicament if put on with care was sure to remove all troubles.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>205</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 227.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup>This was a preparation of the intestine of a fish macerated in salt (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxi, 93).

<sup>209</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxii, 78.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup>*Ibid.*

(6) DROPSY.—The most highly esteemed remedy for this trouble was the strange and repulsive compound made of wild boar's urine mixed in a glass of water and drunk by the patient. It was thought that if this liquid had been first allowed to dry in the bladder of the animal, its healing virtue would be much greater.<sup>213</sup> In addition to this, the ashes of cow-dung or bull-dung, carefully mixed with a little honeyed wine and taken in doses at regular intervals were also thought to bring about a speedy cure.<sup>214</sup> The Roman naturalist urges that in the application of this latter remedy considerable care should be exercised that the dung of the female animal be used when the patient is a woman, and that of the male when the patient is a man.<sup>215</sup>

(7) SPLEEN TROUBLES.—For splenetic affections the magicians recommended the milt of a calf, bought at the price set upon it, without any haggling. This done, the milt should be cut into two lengths and each piece attached to either side of the sufferer's tunic. After wearing the tunic a little while, the patient should let the pieces of milt fall to his feet. Then he should pick them up and dry them in the shade. It will be found, the magicians declared, that as the milt dries and hardens, the diseased liver will gradually contract and at last be cured.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 232.

<sup>214</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii, 232.

<sup>215</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup>Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xviii, 201.

## CONCLUSION

In the course of this survey we have discovered that the Greeks and Romans, in common with primitive man and the modern savage, believed that physical and psychic ills arose not through natural causes, but through the direct interference of an offended deity or through the influence of malignant spirits. We further saw that men, in order to overcome this supernatural hostility, sought to appease the angry divinities by means of sacrifices, prayers, and thank offerings, thereby hoping to remove the cause of their trouble and win lasting peace and health.

## NOTE

This essay was undertaken at the request of Professor G. W. Botsford. Unfortunately, however, his untimely death deprived the writer of his counsel and guidance. The work was finished under the direction of Professor Eugene Tavenner of Washington University, Saint Louis, Missouri. He has read the entire manuscript and made valuable criticisms and corrections. Indeed, whatever merit the work may have, it owes it largely to him.

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